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GENDER, JUSTICE, AND SCHOOLING IN 'POSTFEMINIST' TIMES:

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE 'BOY CRISIS'

by

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A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
School of Education

2011

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Gender, Justice, and Schooling in 'Postfeminist' Times:
A Critical Examination of the 'Boy Crisis'
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Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

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Gender, Justice, and Schooling in 'Postfeminist' Times:

A Critical Examination of the 'Boy Crisis'

Thesis directed by Professor Kenneth R. Howe

Gender and education, as an issue of equity, has predominantly been framed as a concern about schooling the girls. However, in recent years, a growing concern for boys and their education has emerged in most Western countries, making headlines in mainstream US media with little oppositional response from high profile voices and US educational researchers. If media headlines and parental and educator concerns are right, we are in the midst of a "boy crisis" as a result of years of feminist interventions for girls at the expense of boys. Shifting attention to boys and invoking the notion of a generalized "boy crisis" creates an oversimplification in which many complexities are subsumed. Through my analyses in this dissertation, I aim to unravel some of these complexities of gender and schooling and identify a possible way forward that promotes justice. Using a lens of feminist political philosophy, I argue for a transformational gender agenda, grounded in justice, for schooling to benefit both boys and girls in their academic, social, and political development. I continue and contribute to an already rich discussion of theory, politics, and educational policy and practice by providing an improved understanding of how to conceive of and foster gender justice, focusing on schools as sites in which asymmetries of power are played out, which helps us to identify effective strategies for tackling inequalities in schools.

For Zoe

with love and hope

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Completing this dissertation has been a lengthy and arduous process, which I wouldn't have accomplished without considerable encouragement and support along the way. It is with heartfelt thanks that I acknowledge several individuals, who have been especially helpful. I first owe a great deal to Ken Howe, the best mentor I could have hoped for. From the first day of my doctoral program, Ken has been kind, thoughtful, wise, generous, patient, encouraging, and accommodating. Throughout the dissertation process, he has painstakingly read through outlines, drafts, ramblings of ideas, expressions of frustration, etc, providing insightful comments, questions, and suggestions to help me craft a worthy contribution to the field of education. Over the years, I have come to rely on his intellectual guidance and friendship, and I am deeply grateful for all that he has done for me.

My sincere thanks go to Alison Jaggar for the inspiration to write a feminist dissertation and for guiding me in my early exploration of feminist theory, as well as for reading a preliminary outline and steering me in a better direction. An early version of this dissertation containing my initial thinking on the topic was read by Claudia Mills, who provided helpful comments that led to the development of the chapter on political philosophy. I have received questions, comments, and criticisms from my other committee members, Margaret Eisenhart and Michele Moses, which have strengthened the arguments and breadth of the overall dissertation. I take full credit for any

deficiencies that still remain. I would also like to acknowledge Ron Glass, who has provided time, encouragement, and the opportunity to share my work with colleagues and receive useful feedback.

Special thanks go to my family and friends for putting up with my absence, both physical and mental, for so many years. Their understanding, friendship, and love have been with me, as well as the hope for spending more time together in the future.

My greatest debt by far is to Patrick Foster and Zoe Foster, my life partner and daughter, who have been asked to sacrifice so much for me to complete this dissertation, while providing constant love, emotional support, and perspective on what's really important. Zoe was born right before my comprehensive exams and as I was beginning the process of formulating my dissertation. It is because of her that I switched my topic to focus on gender and schooling. I dedicate this dissertation to her with the hope that she will live to see a gender just society.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

American boys are in trouble. Or so it seems. Following the release of a report from the National Center for Education Statistics and the US Department of Education (2004) that shows that many of the educational gaps between girls and boys are shrinking, US Secretary of Education Rod Paige asserted, "It is clear that girls are taking education very seriously and that they have made tremendous strides." He goes on to explain, "The issue now is that boys seem to be falling behind" (US Department of Education, 2004). Girls tend to have higher educational aspirations than boys. Boys are more likely to repeat a grade, have disciplinary problems, be diagnosed with a learning disability, be channeled into special education, and dropout of school. Additionally, girls are out-performing boys in reading and writing, while the differences between boys and girls in math and science are shrinking. In higher education, females are attending undergraduate programs in greater numbers and are more likely than males to graduate. More females are enrolling in graduate programs, though males still have the edge in doctoral and professional degree programs (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2004; Mead, 2006; Center on Education Policy, 2010). The popular conclusion of all this is that a new gender gap has emerged (Conlin, 2003; Gurian & Stevens, 2005; Pollack, 1998; Slocumb, 2004; Sommers, 2000);

“from kindergarten to grad school, boys are becoming the second sex” (Conlin, 2003) as “the undeclared war on boys continues to gather force.” We are in the midst of a “boy crisis.”

This dissertation uses a lens of feminist political philosophy to provide an analysis of the alleged “boy crisis” that will examine gender, including masculinities, in relation to power. According to Francis and Skelton (2005):

The majority of contributions to this field...have been locked into micro issues.

Either they concentrate on the nuances of the arguments (for example, to what extent are boys really ‘underachieving’?...); or they focus on possible pedagogic and institutional approaches which seek to narrow the gender gap in achievement.

There is far less attention on the broader philosophical or political questions upon which these debates might be seen to be predicated, but usually remain unarticulated. (p. 1)

My dissertation provides a contribution that is much needed by attending to the broader philosophical and political issues related to boys and schooling. I do this by invoking a particular conception of justice that augments the other transformational literature, which is mostly limited to conceptions of gender relations that are insufficiently theorized with respect to underlying justice commitments. I hope to provide a framework that better informs how we might tackle inequalities in schools and determine who might be the target of actions. I also hope to offer an improved understanding of how to conceive of and foster gender justice, focusing on schools as sites in which asymmetries of power are played out.

This dissertation employs philosophical analysis that interweaves substantive questions, conceptual frameworks, and analysis while embedding them in the relevant literature. My approach is pragmatic in the way Young (1994) describes: “By being pragmatic, I mean categorizing, explaining, developing accounts and arguments that are tied to specific practical and political problems” (p. 717). Pragmatism, then, is a method of philosophizing as opposed to a perspective. It is an active practice that begins with an actual problem and the belief that alternate futures are possible through human action and philosophical reflection in a malleable social context. It begins and ends with experience, which is inextricably personal and social. With the understanding that doing philosophy requires interaction with environment, pragmatic philosophy underscores the significance of the cultural context of ideas. Pragmatic philosophy, therefore, is an engaging, contextually situated, and potentially transformational practice.

Overview of Arguments and Chapters

The dissertation is composed of five chapters. The following provides an outline of the main components and arguments of each.

Following this introduction, Chapter Two is meant to situate the arguments of the dissertation by providing a brief historical analysis of the policy and practice of education with regards to gender. I identify a sort of historical pendulum trend of gender concerns about boys, then girls, and now back to boys. The earliest concerns around gender and education focused on the effects of coeducation on boys. Like today, working class and poor boys and boys from immigrant families struggled in the school setting, while girls of similar backgrounds did better (Barnett & Rivers, 2006a,

2006b; Tyack and Hansot, 1990). These early concerns led to the development of a differentiated curriculum for boys and girls and the establishment of school-based sports programs to masculinize schools and capture the interest of otherwise disinterested boys.

In the 1970s, coinciding with the ascendancy of second-wave feminist activism and scholarship on the heels of the civil rights movement and in the midst of the women's liberation movement, gender equity became a major focus of US public education, resulting in significant legislation and changes in policy and practice aimed at creating equality of educational opportunities for girls. Feminists were interested in the role schooling played in women's sociopolitical and economic inequality. By focusing on things such as textbook bias, classroom interactions, course-taking patterns, differential counseling about course-taking and career choices based on gender, sports and extracurricular activities, teacher education that perpetuates gender bias, the achievement gap in favor of boys in secondary math and science, the gendered division of labor, and a hostile school climate, feminists showed that schools supported and reproduced sexual discrimination through a hidden curriculum and institutional sexism.

Educational activists in the women's movement were using strategies similar to those of the civil rights movement, such as consciousness-raising to make gender discrimination visible among educators, policy makers, and the general public, as well as efforts to change law and educational policy and practice. Challenging conventional gender understandings proved to be difficult because of the perceived naturalness of gender differences. Furthermore, because the US system of governance is highly

decentralized and locally administered, the ability to make changes in policy and practice in individual districts and classrooms was very inconsistent. Due to these obstacles to challenging gender norms, the approach relied less on changing individual consciousness or behavior and more on changing institutional structures and rules through state and federal legislation in conjunction with applying local pressure to ensure successful implementation.

Consistent with a particular variant of liberal feminism, the predominant feminist perspective of the time, the principal aim of the political legal strategy of feminist educational activists was to provide girls with the same educational opportunities as boys by removing barriers. They used language about equal rights, treatment, and opportunities, appealing to the common notions of justice among policy makers and judges. This liberal agenda resulted in major legal advances with the passage of Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and the Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) in 1974. The regulations of Title IX provided rough legal tools for challenging gender inequality in public schools. WEEA created a federal resource center to aid in the implementation of Title IX by funding demonstration projects and other resources for state and local education entities, such as science programs for girls and making vocational and physical education less gender-stereotyped. In 1976, the Vocational Education Act was passed, requiring states to fund sex-equity specialists to review vocational education programs for sex bias and stereotypes. Schools were also affected by legal changes in gender equity across contexts, such as the 1963 Equal Pay Act and Title VII of the 1964

Civil Rights Act. The Equal Pay Act established equal pay for equal work and prohibited gender discrimination, while Title VII prohibited discrimination based on gender, as well as race, ethnicity, religion, and national origin. Both affected schools' employment practices.

The liberal feminist legal gains provided an important legal framework to encourage local education agencies to make schools more egalitarian through the removal of barriers to increase educational access and opportunities for girls. However, the more entrenched sexism rooted in teaching practices, curricular materials, and school culture was more difficult to change. In the 1980s, a new group of feminist theorists began to question the identification of equality with sameness and began to investigate other conceptions. Some argued that girls have distinct (feminine) needs, values, and ways of learning, thinking, and relating. As such, simply providing girls with equal educational opportunities does little to challenge the masculine institution of schools, which harms girls (and boys) and perpetuates gender inequality. These "gynocentric" or difference feminists, such as Carol Gilligan, Nel Noddings, and Jane Roland Martin, challenged the underlying patriarchal values driving educational policy, practice, goals, structures, and leadership.

Along with the liberal feminist inspired legal changes and difference feminist contributions to moral and political philosophy, gender theory was advancing. A social constructionist account of gender, which challenges biological essentialism by highlighting the cultural variability of gender, was one of the key conceptual tools of second wave feminism, and this is particularly evident in feminist empirical research.

“Sex role” theory emerged as the predominant conception of gender, which contends that gender differences exist because children are socialized for particular roles in society by learning and internalizing appropriate ways of behaving. This conceptual shift from gender being natural and fixed to gender being socially constructed through social expectations and practices provided the basis for feminist efforts in schools to promote counter-sexist curricula and pedagogies and to examine the role of teachers in gender socialization, the gender make-up of the school faculty and staff, and the sexist school climate.

In the latter part of the 1980s, some feminist scholars were finding that role theory couldn’t account for the active role that individuals play in the construction of gender identities and that different constructions of gender are imbued with varying levels of social status. As a result, more fluid social constructionist accounts of gender were developed that addressed the tension between social structure and human agency in gender identity development. This prompted the trend toward plural terminology for gender (“masculinities” and “femininities”). But despite the emerging theories of gender critical of sex role theory, it maintained its dominance and had the greatest impact on educational practice and policy, the effects of which still linger today.

Coincident with advances in gender theory, moral and political philosophy, and changes in educational practices that were affecting girls’ experiences and opportunities in schools, a shifting political context slowed the momentum of gender equity efforts in schools. As a result, even though feminist educational theorists were moving beyond liberal feminist concerns to address issues of power, dominance, and oppression, and

were creating new theoretical tools to continue tackling gender inequality, actual changes in policy and practice were difficult to effect in the political climate of the 1980s.

In 1992, a widely publicized AAUW report¹ entitled *How Schools Shortchange Girls* spurred a resurgence of interest in girls' educational issues, such as self-esteem, gender-bias in testing, math and science achievement gaps, course taking patterns, and biased teaching practices and curriculum, by framing them as a matter of both justice and economic survival. Influenced by preceding liberal feminist efforts and sex role theory, the AAUW report argued for strengthening enforcement and support of Title IX and made other suggestions for changing social expectations for girls (and boys) through changes in curriculum, pedagogy, counseling, and course-taking patterns. The report also showed evidence of Nel Noddings's and Jane Roland Martin's influence on thinking about gender and schooling by highlighting the need to develop relational skills along with the academic skills in order to effectively prepare girls and boys for participation in the work force, family, and community.

In response to changing socioeconomic situations for boys and men, increased opportunities and expanding social roles for girls and women, and the rise of large-scale accountability schemes to measure school success that draw attention to a cluster of boys at the bottom, a distinct shift in attention toward boys occurred in the mid-to late-1990s and continues today. Increased attention to boys' lower academic achievement and their higher rates of dropping out, special education participation, grade

¹ The research was commissioned by the AAUW and developed by the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women.

repetitions, diagnoses of learning disabilities, and disciplinary problems, combined to support the idea that boys were indeed in “crisis.” Trends of shrinking test score gaps between boys and girls in math and science, where boys had the historical advantage, and increasing gaps in language arts, where girls have scored higher over time, supposedly indicate that the feminist project for equal educational opportunity is complete, and, as a result, we have moved into “postfeminist” times. In fact, according to this view, there might even be a reversal of things such that girls have come to hold an advantaged position. Presumed equality allows for schools and society to treat men and women and boys and girls as equally disadvantaged groups and can greatly affect the way equity concerns are taken up and the way gender policies in education are framed.

In Chapter Three, I provide a closer examination of this moment in educational policy, practice, and research. I scrutinize the major positions exemplifying the “boy turn”² found in both the popular and scholarly literature.

The most vocal and visible response to problems associated with boys and schooling has come from the media and popular books. In the US, there has been major media coverage of the “boy crisis,” including cover stories in both *Newsweek* (Tyre, 2006) and *Time* (Von Drehle, 2007), major stories in the *New Republic* (Whitmire, 2006) and *Esquire* (Chiarella, 2006), a “Today Show” segment, and a PBS special (2000). Additionally, there have been many stories and op-ed pieces in newspapers and popular books. Various perspectives are represented in these, but the common underlying

² This term comes from Marcus Weaver-Hightower (2003a).

themes are that boys are alienated by the new dominance of feminine values (masquerading as gender equality), and that they need to be able to express and be proud of their innate masculinity. Furthermore, not only are schools partially responsible for creating the “boy crisis” over the last several decades by failing to meet the needs of boys and properly equipping them for the changing economic and social landscape, but schools are also the best means to fix such problems, especially by creating classrooms that are designed to meet boys’ interests and strengths, not just girls’. Moreover, in order to claim that there actually are identifiable and specific boys’ interests and characteristics, the popular literature often invokes new research on the natural differences between boys’ and girls’ brains (see for example, Gurian et al., 2001; Gurian, & Stevens, 2005). Accordingly, the popular-rhetorical literature is based on essentialist or biosocial understandings of gender. Additionally, while treating *all* boys as disadvantaged, this view presumes the feminist project is done.

There has been a varied scholarly response, which attempts to address a lack of sophistication in the analyses found in the popular responses to the educational issues of boys. In order to better understand the range of scholarly responses, I distinguish two foremost categories:³ (1) the meliorative response, which is based on responding to statistical analyses of achievement and other data, as well as responses that tend to address teaching and learning, emphasizing school- and classroom-based strategies for raising academic achievement of boys; and (2) the transformational response, which

³ These are categories that I have made up for analytical purposes and, as such, are not perfect but are certainly useful to map the varied terrain of scholarly work around boys’ issues in education.

typically provides critical philosophical and sociological analyses of the larger sociopolitical context of education, underscoring the relational structures of gender that powerfully affect individuals and institutions. While meliorative responses tend to identify compensatory measures to help all students “succeed” within existing educational arrangements, the transformational responses aim to change existing educational arrangements and define success by much more robust measures than achievement scores.

Meliorative scholarship that responds to statistical analyses of achievement data makes claims that the statistics used to support the “boy crisis” are misleading in that they treat boys as a unified group, when, in fact, there are vast difference within the group of boys. Such responses suggest that we should be asking the question, “Which boys?” The answer to that question, the argument goes, makes the crisis look like one primarily of race and class, and only secondarily one of gender. Poor minority boys are struggling compared to middle class white boys, and the same is true for girls (though poor minority girls tend to do better than their male counterparts) (Mead, 2006).

Another view within the meliorative scholarship is that the focus on boys distracts from the reality that achievement gains, increased college enrollments, and higher rates of degree completion made by girls are not translating into greater gender equity beyond school. There are still issues of pay inequality between males and females in all fields, structural barriers still exist to keep women out of the fields of science and technology, and representation of women in prestigious positions still lags behind men. Such arguments lead to suggestions for responses in the schools that

follow in the footsteps of earlier feminist interventions, including removing barriers to access.

As a whole, the meliorative scholarship addresses some of the problems of the popular-rhetorical view on boys and schooling by recognizing that boys are not a homogenous group and that some, because of racial and material inequality, are facing real trouble in schools and society; recognizing that girls' success does not come at the expense of boys' and that there still may be issues for girls to be addressed; and leaving room for social, rather than biological, explanations for the differences among boys' and girls' experiences in schools and later in life. However, this body of work fails to consider larger issues of power and that gender is a primary issue along with race/ethnicity and class. The body of work comprising the transformational scholarship deals with these issues.

What I call the "transformational" response is a large body of work that mostly deals with gender construction, especially sociological work examining masculinities within institutional and cultural contexts. This work largely comes from scholars in the UK and Australia, where concern over boys and schooling has been most pervasive and a scholarly topic since the mid-1990s. R.W. Connell and other profeminists and feminists have led the way, particularly by building on social constructionist and relational gender and feminist theories from the 1980s and 1990s (as I discuss in Chapter Two). I have identified two broad themes that have emerged as the most significant contributions of the transformational perspective: (1) a relational model that

theorizes gender as a set of social positions accounting for power dynamics within and between genders and (2) masculinities as an important aspect of gender.

I draw from R.W. Connell (2002)⁴ to detail the multiple dimensions in gender relations that involve three constantly intermingling and interacting structures, labor or production relations, power relations, and cathexis or emotional and symbolic relations, that define possibilities and consequences for how individuals and/or groups act. There are practices that construct various kinds of femininity and masculinity. Some gender patterns (e.g., forms of masculinity and femininity) are hegemonic and others are subordinate. This hierarchy of gender patterns constitutes the structure of power. There is a distinct, though not absolute, division of labor (constituting the structure of labor). There is an ideology about sexual behavior and character (constituting the structure of cathexis). The three structures of gender relations make up the *gender order* of society, which is manifested within institutions as *gender regimes*. The gender regimes of particular institutions are part of wider patterns and usually correspond to the overall gender order, but may depart from it. This is important for change. Some institutions are better sites for change, changing quickly, while others are slow to change. Change often starts in some places of society and seeps in to others over time. Schools have particularly clear gender regimes. Through intersecting structures of relations, schools create institutional definitions of masculinity and femininity that

⁴ While Connell is not the only theorist to conceive of gender as a set of interrelated social positions, I rely heavily on her work because she has been a preeminent scholar in developing the concept of “masculinities,” especially the idea of a “hegemonic masculinity,” and applying this to boys in the school setting. Her work has served as the springboard for so much other scholarly work in this area, but owes a very large debt to her feminist predecessors investigating girls and schooling.

students must engage with either by conforming, rebelling, or attempting to modify the patterns.

This more sophisticated relational conception of gender provides a rich framework for thinking about gender issues in education generally, and the education of boys specifically. It allows us to see students as gendered agents within the setting of the school and schools as constraining the making of gender by students. This understanding provides new ways of looking at schools as an integral site of the struggle for gender justice. In the case of understanding the issue of boys and schooling, it is necessary to address the various forms of masculinities resulting from configurations of practice within gender relations, which is the second broad theme I have identified within the transformational scholarship.

The predominant transformational literature draws heavily from Connell's development of the concept of multiple masculinities (1987; 2000; 2002). According to Connell, there is a societal hierarchy between and within the various forms of masculinity and femininity that is based on the global dominance of men over women. This structural feature creates a dominant or "hegemonic" form of masculinity that is constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities and in relation to femininities. Hegemonic masculinity is distinguished from a universal male sex role in that the cultural ideal(s) of masculinity are not necessarily consistent with the personalities of the majority of men. Even so, many men participate in maintaining the ideal even if most don't measure up. Most scholars among those studying boys and schooling from the transformational perspective argue that "hegemonic masculinity,"

which subordinates women and distributes power unevenly among men, is the root of the boys' problems in schools and explains to some extent why certain boys are doing worse than others.

I find the transformational scholarship to be the most promising for understanding the full complexities of gender and the role that schooling plays in gender development, as well as for critically examining how schools might be structured to promote just gender regimes and eventually a just gender order. However, while the transformational scholarship as a whole invokes a justice perspective, what is meant by justice has not been adequately theorized. In Chapter Four, I initiate filling this gap by articulating a self-conscious, defensible theory of justice to ground the transformational literature. To do this, I begin by addressing the tension between distribution and recognition, two predominant theories of justice that occupy a central place in current political philosophy. I then appeal to Nancy Fraser's theorizing and develop a critical⁵ conception of justice that joins the two paradigms by reconceptualizing recognition as *status* and utilizing *participatory parity* as the unifying normative concept.

Distributive theories have, in modern times, been the foremost approach for analyzing justice claims and are embedded in the liberal tradition. Distributive conceptions of justice are concerned with the fair allocation of the benefits of society, though they differ to a great extent on the subject of distribution (income, wealth, opportunities, rights, duties, etc.), the beneficiaries of redistribution (individuals or

⁵ By *critical*, I mean prioritizing the critique of institutionalized injustice, guided by a practical, emancipatory interest in revealing and eradicating such injustice through structural change.

groups), and the basis for which redistribution should be made (equality, equity, merit, maximization, etc.). As such, justice requires measures that equalize the distribution of social benefits, thereby remedying maldistribution.

Alternatively, conceptions of justice emphasizing recognition deal with overcoming the stigmatization of depreciated cultures, identities, ways of life, and social contributions that result from institutionalized disrespect that is not reducible to maldistribution. Accordingly, justice requires the recognition of group identities or the recognition of difference. Analyzing justice claims in terms of recognition and its association with “identity politics” and a “politics of difference” arose out of large-scale political movements based on group membership, such as feminism, Black liberation, gay and lesbian liberation, and the Native American movement in the US and others worldwide. These group-based movements found that distributive conceptions of justice and politics do not adequately deal with issues of group differentiation, such as claims for recognition of the distinctive perspectives of ethnic, “racial,” gender, and sexual groups.

The major thrust of the discussion in Chapter Four regarding the distribution/recognition dilemma is to explicate the philosophical tension between the two normative frameworks and appeal to Fraser for a two-dimensional conception of justice that accommodates claims for recognition and redistribution without reducing one to the other. While there is a theoretical tension between distribution and recognition, because of distribution being grounded in morality (justice) and recognition being grounded in ethics (the good), this need not be a problem if recognition is

properly conceived as a *status model* rather than an identity model (Fraser, 1997, 2000, 2004, 2005, 2008 (in Olson)). As I understand the dilemma, the tension is really between status and identity.

Identity models of recognition take misrecognition to mean distorted subjectivity and harmed self-identity concerned with impediments to self-realization, human flourishing, and the good life (Honneth, 1996; Taylor, 1994). They are problematic because in conceiving of misrecognition only as damaged identity, psychology is given importance over social institutions and interactions, putting a focus on changing individual psychology rather than social transformation. The problems are greater when the object of recognition is group identity. By putting moral pressure on individuals to conform to group culture, the complexities of people's lives and their multiple and possibly changing identities may be denied, and identities may be essentialized. This also runs the risk of reifying culture, ignoring struggles within social groups.

Fraser's status model of recognition attempts to accommodate the full complexity of social identities. According to the status model, what requires recognition is not group-specific identity, but rather the status of individual group members as full partners in social interactions of all sorts, including politics, the labor market, family, and so on. Misrecognition, therefore, is social subordination in the sense of social actors being prevented from participating as a peer in social interactions broadly conceived. To be misrecognized, then, is not simply to be looked down upon or diminished by others, but rather to be denied the status of full partner in social interactions as a consequence of *institutionalized* patterns of cultural value that deem

certain individuals unworthy of respect. Recognition, therefore, is a remedy for social injustice not merely the satisfaction of a human need, placing recognition in social relations and avoiding some of the problems of identity politics described above. The form of recognition required in a particular case, either universal recognition of humanity or the recognition of distinctiveness, depends on the form of misrecognition and cannot be determined a priori, but rather approached in the manner of pragmatism informed by the insights of social theory.

The unifying normative concept is what Fraser calls *participatory parity*. Justice, accordingly, requires social arrangements that permit participatory parity. Participatory Parity has two conditions that must be met: objective conditions (distribution concerns) and intersubjective conditions (recognition concerns). Both conditions are necessary, and neither alone is sufficient. The economic and social arrangements must not deny some people the means and opportunities to interact with others as peers by institutionalizing exploitation, deprivation, or gross disparities in wealth and income. The second condition requires that institutionalized patterns of cultural value express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social esteem, preventing institutionalized norms that systematically depreciate some categories of people and the qualities associated with them. The second condition does not obtain when, for example, institutionalized cultural valuations downgrade femininity, 'nonwhiteness,' homosexuality, and everything culturally associated with them. When that is the case, women and/or people of color and/or gays and lesbians, as well as anybody else, including straight white men, who choose to engage in activities

or develop traits that are culturally coded as feminine, homosexual, or ‘nonwhite,’ face obstacles in participation that are not encountered by others.

In the next section of Chapter Four, I turn to a discussion of remedies to injustice (strategies for addressing impediments to participatory parity), which is, I think, most helpful for augmenting the transformational literature and informing educational policy and practice. Fraser (Honneth & Fraser, 2003) distinguishes two broad approaches to remedies for injustice that bridge the distribution-recognition divide: affirmation and transformation. The difference between the two turns on their emphases on outcomes and processes respectively. Affirmative strategies on both dimensions of justice, distribution and recognition, leave existing social structures intact, while transformational approaches require institutional restructuring.

I pull examples from the two previous chapters to argue that affirmative strategies predominate in the literature about gender and schooling, as well as in past and present policy and practice. For example, the legal changes of the 1960s and 1970s emphasized removing barriers and establishing the same educational opportunities for girls as boys, while later efforts inspired by the AAUW report echoed this affirmative politics of redistribution through suggesting resource reallocation to increase educational opportunities by addressing gendered course-taking patterns, differential career counseling and sports and extracurricular offerings, and academic support for girls in math and science. On the recognition side, the emphasis was affirmative, as well, through early efforts of the difference feminists to make girls and women more visible and valued by tackling textbook bias, curricular materials, and “girl friendly”

pedagogies of cooperation and caring. Later work by Sadker and Sadker (1994) continued this affirmative recognition work through raising issues about gendered classroom attention favoring boys, claiming that small differences can have large consequences for the self-esteem of girls, the way boys view girls in terms of status, and gendered messages about behavior expectations. Within the current boy turn, by addressing achievement differences between boys and girls through the redistribution of course taking patterns and academic supports, meliorative scholarship also emphasizes affirmative strategies with a politics of redistribution.

In the end, I deem the transformational strategies as the best means for promoting justice vis a vis gender in schools. I argue that the transformational scholarship that I explore in Chapter Three is consistent with such an approach because of its conceptualization of gender as both a material and cultural phenomenon requiring considerations of both recognition and redistribution, which presupposes remedies that require a restructuring of gender relations.

While transformative approaches are preferable, they are very difficult in practice because they often take a very long time and are detached from the everyday concerns of most people. As such, I offer Fraser's (Honneth & Fraser, 2003) notion of "non-reformist reforms" as a *via media*. These are policies and practices that can both meet the immediate needs of people and put us on a trajectory to transformation. In time, more radical reforms may become practicable. I then use the example of the state of Maine's *Task Force on Gender Equity in Education* (2007) to show an actual promising *via media* strategy. The Maine task Force was developed in response to educator

concerns about the academic performance of boys and evolved into a document that outlines the characteristics of gender equitable schools to benefit both boys and girls. Substantially drawing from and influenced by the transformational scholarship discussed in Chapter Three, the Task Force acknowledged the complexity of gender, its relational nature, and its intersections with other social factors, such as race and class. The suggestions offered by the Task Force, such as broadening the acceptable course and activity choices for boys and girls, emphasizing pedagogical strategies that integrate reading and writing, encouraging critical thinking and problem solving, and building on students' prior experiences, and addressing school climate issues through policies and critical engagement with students, while affirmative in their approach for the most part may have transformational effects downstream. Policy statements like this provide hope for the future of schooling for social justice if they are carefully developed and implemented.

I conclude Chapter Four by arguing that my analysis provides conceptual tools to think more deeply about justice and the role schools play in promoting gender justice. Such tools help us avoid or move beyond some of the affirmative remedies suggested through the meliorative scholarship that provide only surface reallocations, leaving intact the deeper structures of injustice. It also helps us identify promising via media approaches that lead the way for future transformative policies and practices within education. Such an approach provides hope for both boys and girls by tackling unjust gender regimes in schools and later in life through potentially changing the gender order.

Chapter Five concludes the dissertation by providing a summary of the findings, acknowledging gaps, and suggesting directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

GENDER AND SCHOOLING: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THEORY, POLICY, & PRACTICE

Susan M. Bailey (2002) correctly maintains, “it is impossible to fully appreciate or understand today’s raging debates over gender issues in education without first taking into account the path that led us here” (p. 1). To situate my arguments found in later chapters, this chapter provides a brief historical analysis of gender and educational policy, theory, and practice in the US with particular emphasis on the 1970s, 1980s, and early to mid 1990s. During this time, gender equity became a major focus of education, resulting in significant legislation and changes in policy and practice due to the ascendancy of second-wave feminist activism and scholarship.

Gender and Coeducation: The Original ‘Boy Problem’

Most early concerns about gender and schooling centered on issues of coeducation. The common school model in the US established public schools where boys and girls were taught side by side. However, in the early 1900s, concerns for boys were mounting because boys did not do as well in school as girls. According to Tyack and Hansot (1992):

At the turn of the century, a large number of educators and researchers piled up evidence on the massive rates of ‘retardation’ (or grade repetition) and ‘dropouts’ (a term that seems to have been coined sometime about 1900) among ‘hand-minded’ boys, many of whom were of immigrant background. Educators experimented with

segregating boys and girls in academic courses in order to adapt tracks for boys from blue-collar families and wanted to make schooling in general more relevant to work by stressing the 'life career motive.' They also sought to instill a more masculine tone and temper in the schools, in part by co-opting the informal interscholastic athletics that boys themselves had created. (p. 166)

As is the case today, many problems associated with boys as a whole were actually problems for working class and poor boys and those from immigrant families.

In the public schools, differentiating the curriculum was the progressive response to the issues of assimilating immigrants, facilitating the transition from school to work, easing clashes between socioeconomic classes, and focusing on health and family life. Progressives "wanted to create a school that would deal with the whole child and the whole society and believed their goals could be achieved through a carefully differentiated program" (Tyack & Hansot, 1992, p. 168). Differentiation by social class, academic ability, and ethnicity were controversial. However, differentiation by gender raised little concern because popular belief was that the sex of children not only would shape their opportunities in life, it should. It followed that boys and girls needed to be prepared for different futures. Most progressive educators agreed that girls should be prepared for marriage and motherhood and that boys needed a broader preparation for various opportunities available as careers (Tyack & Hansot, 1992). The curriculum was adapted to respond to these various goals.

In addition to the problems boys faced educationally, there was also a concern that with the large number of women teachers, schools were too feminine for boys,

accounting at least in part for their struggles and disinterest in academics. In response to this, the public school system began investing in sports programs for boys.

Male interscholastic sports fulfilled an important symbolic function by asserting the masculinity of the public schools. In this sense, sports directly addressed the 'boy problem' and justified investments in elaborate gymnasiums and playing fields.

(Tyack & Hansot, 1992, p. 200)

Attention Shifts to the Girls

While early concerns about gender and education dealt with the effects of coeducation on boys, it wasn't until the 1970s that gender became an educational equity issue and the focus shifted to girls, thereby making the notion of "gender and education" synonymous with schooling the girls. This coincided with the preeminence of second wave feminism, particularly liberal feminism, and the broader women's liberation movement. Feminists were focused on the role schools played in women's sociopolitical and economic inequality, and they began to look at how schools supported and reproduced sexual discrimination by revealing the hidden curriculum and institutional sexism.⁶ They focused on things like textbook bias, classroom interactions, course-taking patterns, counseling differences by sex for course taking and career choice, sports and extracurricular activities, teacher education that perpetuates sex bias, girls lagging in math and science in secondary schooling, and the gendered division of labor within schools.

⁶ The term "sexism" became popularized by Gayle Rubin in an article she wrote for the *Ann Arbor Argus* (a Michigan newspaper) entitled "Woman as Nigger" (1969).

Liberal Feminism: An Emphasis on Legal Reforms

Drawing on the strategies of the civil right's movement, educational activists in the women's movement responded through both consciousness-raising among educators, policy makers, and the general public and working towards the development and successful implementation of legal and policy changes. In terms of the latter, making gender discrimination visible was (and still continues to be) a difficult task because differences between boys and girls and men and women were (are) seen to be natural. "Unlike racial discrimination, which had been written into law and conscious policy, much educational discrimination against girls and women was unconscious and thus invisible to people—both educators and the general public. What was the problem, they asked, if boys behaved like boys and girls like girls?" (Tyack & Hansot, 1992, p. 247). Additionally, because the US system of education governance is highly decentralized and locally administered, making changes in policy and practice in individual districts and classrooms was very difficult and uneven. Because of these difficulties in challenging gender norms, the approach relied less on changing individual consciousness or behavior and more on changing institutional structures and rules through state and federal legislative changes as well as through applying local pressure to ensure successful implementation.

The central aim of the political legal strategy of feminist educational activists was to make public coeducational schooling truly identical for the sexes, which is consistent with a particular variant of liberal feminism, the dominant feminist perspective of the time. This view seeks to provide women with the same opportunities as men. In terms

of education, this view seeks to remove barriers and provide formal equality of educational opportunity. “By articulating their concerns in the language of equal rights and equal treatment, advocates provided policymakers and particularly the courts with a familiar standard that appealed to fundamental notions of fairness and justice” (Salomone, 2003, p. 62).

The limited liberal agenda of educational activists resulted in the passage of several pieces of federal legislation, most importantly Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, prohibiting sex discrimination in scholarships, housing, facilities, and access to courses, and specifically in athletics, admissions, recruitment, wages, and financial assistance. The bill stipulated that federal funds would be revoked from public schools that did not comply, though there were few particulars. The regulations, after much stalling, were finally passed in 1975, but did not contain all the provisions sought by feminists. However, they did provide rough legal tools for challenging sex inequality in the public schools. In 1974, Congress passed the Women’s Educational Equity Act (WEEA), creating a federal resource center for improving the educational experiences and achievement of girls. WEEA provided a small budget to fund demonstration projects and other resources, such as science programs for girls and making vocational and physical education less sex-stereotyped, for state local education agencies to aid in the implementation of Title IX.⁷ During the Reagan and first Bush administrations of the

⁷ WEEA expired and was not renewed in 1999. There is a current federal grant program available to fund mostly local implementation of gender equity policies and practices. They may also fund research activities.

1980s, courts redefined Title IX. The US Supreme Court case, *Grove City v. Bell* (1984), ruled that Title IX regulations applied only to programs, rather than whole institutions, directly funded by the federal government. If a particular program was discriminatory, the program suffered consequences, not the institution. Marshall (1997) argues that this decision resulted from concerns around requiring funding of equal football and basketball athletic programs for boys and girls, as well as “the possible horrors of unisex bathrooms” (pp. 65-66). With the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, Congress essentially overrode the *Grove City v. Bell* decision by making clear that Title IX enforcement should apply to institutions as a whole.

The Vocational Education Act was passed in 1976, requiring states to fund sex-equity specialists to review vocational education programs for sex bias and stereotypes. Furthermore, “many states passed their own laws forbidding gender discrimination in primary and secondary education, with some states extending this prohibition to higher education as well” (Bank, 1997, p. 6).

In addition to legal changes concerned specifically with gender and schooling, schools have also been affected by legal changes in gender equity across contexts. These include the 1963 Equal Pay Act and Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The Equal Pay Act established equal pay for equal work and prohibits gender discrimination. At the same time, it allows for differences in pay that are based on “merit, seniority, productivity, and market circumstances, criteria that are often interpreted in ways that favor men over women” (Bank, 1997, p. 5). Since its passage, the Equal Pay Act has been interpreted by courts to require substantially equal, but not identical, pay for men

and women doing the same work. Feminist activists have unsuccessfully pushed for a “comparable worth” interpretation that would require equal pay for men and women in jobs that, while different, require the same qualifications, skill levels, and responsibility. This would aid in the elimination of the common practice of paying men more for jobs of comparable worth with jobs predominantly held by women.

Title VII prohibits discrimination based on gender as well as race, ethnicity, religion, and national origin. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was established to enforce compliance with the law. Because of the failure of the EEOC to consistently address issues of gender discrimination, the EEOC developed guidelines for addressing gender discrimination. Title VII was expanded in subsequent years to include The Pregnancy Disability Act of 1978. Additionally, “the Courts have used such Congressional mandates as basis for transition from gender discrimination and protective legislation to more equal employment opportunities for women” (Bank, 1997, p. 6). The Equal Pay Act and Title VII affected schools’ employment practices.

The liberal feminist political legal strategy of reform provided modest gains in challenging institutional sexism in public education through a legal framework to encourage local education agencies to make schools more egalitarian through the removal of barriers to increase access and opportunity. “But these changes did not reach the subtler forms of sexism, such as biased textbooks and sex-stereotyped ways of teaching. More profound reforms would require...training teachers, rewriting curricular materials, and grassroots campaigns to arouse the public” (Tyack & Hansot, 1992, p. 247). Additionally, to some feminists, “liberal policies could generate policy

implementation and micropolitics studies, but few examined whether policy could undo patriarchy” (Marshall and Andre-Bechely, 2008, p. 286).

Difference Feminism and Schooling: An Ethic of Care

In the 1980s, a new group of feminist theorists began to question whether being equal meant that men and women were identical and what its rejection meant for teaching girls and boys. Some were arguing that because of gender socialization and the valuing of the masculine over the feminine in terms of sociopolitical power and privilege, girls have distinct (feminine) needs, values, and ways of learning, thinking, and relating. As such, simply providing girls with equal educational opportunities does little to challenge the masculine institution of schools, which harms girls (and boys) and perpetuates gender inequality. These “gynocentric feminists” or difference feminists, such as Carol Gilligan, Nel Noddings and Jane Roland Martin, challenged the underlying values driving educational policy, practice, goals, structures, and leadership.

Moral psychologist Carol Gilligan’s *In a Different Voice* (1982) set the stage for major advances in feminist ethical theorizing by asserting that the moral concerns and ways of reasoning were quite different for men and women because of their distinctively different life experiences. She found that the moral concerns of men were more likely to focus on abstract issues of justice and rights among autonomous individuals, whereas women were more likely to frame moral concerns around others with whom they have a relationship and maintaining these relationships. In their methods of moral reasoning, Gilligan found that men were more likely to rely on derivations from abstract moral principles in contrast to women’s likely focus on people

and their situational contexts. While traditional moral theory emphasized concerns and methods of moral reasoning associated with men, Gilligan argued that an adequate moral theory must encompass both forms of moral reasoning and concerns since they each include valuable insights.

Gilligan's work inspired the development of an ethics of care in feminist philosophy giving primary attention to caring relationships that are largely found in the experiences of women, expanding our understanding of the ethical to include the concept of care. Care ethics takes a relational rather than universalist approach to moral reasoning, focusing specifically on familial and other dependent relationships. A care ethics stresses the importance of a concept of self that is always in relationship. Moral judgments are tied to empathy and compassion. And where much of traditional ethics emphasizes the importance of developing autonomy and non-interference with another's life plan, care ethics underscores the importance of maintaining connections with others and the relational context of creating life plans.

Care ethics had some influence on schooling, most notably from Nel Noddings' book *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984), which emphasizes the importance of cultivating moral concern, not just moral reasoning.⁸ Noddings sees schooling as central to the development of caring individuals. Noddings starts with care theory's idea that morality is relational and extends that to schooling;

⁸ It should be noted that for care theorists the emphasis is on the concept of *care* in moral development beyond reasoning, as opposed to other concepts, such as character and citizenship. Care theorists are not the only thinkers to challenge schools to consider moral concern rather than just moral reasoning. Amy Gutmann and John Dewey figure prominently among such thinkers, and Nel Noddings owes a debt the Dewey (as I point out later in the chapter).

teaching and learning are relational and take place through caring relationships. She highlights the relationship between the “one-caring” and the “cared-for” (teachers as the one-caring and students as the cared-for) and asks what sort of organization might be compatible with this picture. As such, Noddings argues for a curriculum emphasizing what she refers to as “chains and circles of caring,” rather than programs. She suggests that this may require small schools. The caring is completed when the cared-for receives the caring, and the one-caring knows this through some sort of response from the cared-for (i.e., happy immersion in a project). The natural reward of teaching (one-caring) is in the responsiveness of the student (presumably the positive response). Support needs to be given to teachers when the caring continually fails to be complete (i.e., the cared-for doesn't respond appropriately). She is essentially proposing that schools and teaching be designed such that the caring can be initiated in the one-caring and completed in the cared-for.

According to Noddings, moral education based on an ethic of care has four major dimensions: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. Modeling is very important for showing students caring relations. Additionally, the capacity to care is partially developed by experiencing being cared for. Dialogue creates connections, helps maintain caring relations, and aids in making informed decisions by allowing opportunities for a common search for understanding through asking questions and genuine mutual exploration. The dimension of practice refers to providing students with experiences to develop caring relations. Confirmation entails affirming and encouraging the best in others in order to aid in positive development.

Noddings provides an extension of her early work with the book *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (1992). She continues to challenge liberal education (defined as a set of traditional disciplines) and pushes for radical change in both curriculum and teaching practices. She explains:

It is an argument, first, against an ideology of control that forces all students to study a particular, narrowly prescribed curriculum devoid of content they might care about. Second, it is an argument in favor of greater respect for a wonderful range of human capacities now largely ignored in schools. Third, it is an argument against the persistent undervaluing of skills, attitudes, and capacities traditionally associated with women. (1992, p. xiii)

Noddings entreats us to give up the notion of the ideal educated person, replacing it with “a multiplicity of models designed to accommodate the multiple capacities and interests of students,” recognizing multiple identities (1992, p. 173). With her belief that the central purpose of education is a moral one, Noddings is arguing for a very broad view of moral education that not only includes developing moral people, but also one that is moral in intention, policy, and practice. This means that decisions about curriculum and materials, as well as teaching and counseling methods are moral choices.

Noddings reinforces her definition of caring as *relational* as opposed to an individual virtue or character attribute or a set of behaviors. She also expands on the idea of developing caring capacities for entering into caring relations and attending to

objects and ideas. Following John Dewey (1895, 1897, 1899, 1902, 1916, 1938),⁹ Noddings's broad plan for making caring central in education requires matching the needs, capacities, and interests of all children by organizing the curriculum around domains or centers of caring: caring for self; caring for intimate others (caring in the inner circle); caring for strangers, associates and distant others; caring for animals, plants, and the Earth; caring for the human-made world; and caring for ideas. Closely related to these centers of care, Noddings argues that education must nurture the varied cognitive capacities of all students, resembling Howard Gardner's scheme of multiple intelligences, and make considerations for differences based on race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and religion.

Jane Roland Martin is another feminist philosopher that has addressed issues of education from a perspective of care ethics (1981, 1985). Martin maintains that the discussion of education has been conducted in such a way as to exclude women from its

⁹In his essay (1895), *Interest in Relation to Training of the Will*, John Dewey addresses the tension between interest or relevance and mastery of subject matter (effort). His position is that if educational experiences are created as problems for students to solve, then students' interest will be captured at the same time as mastery of the subject is obtained by working through the problems. Because Dewey claims that it is impossible to exert any effort without interest, interest must be captured because effort is required for learning. In *My Pedagogic Creed* (1897), Dewey emphasizes the individual as social, the school as a community, and learning through social interaction (education is a process of living, rather than preparation for the future). He also stresses the importance of integrating subject matter with the interests (social life) of the children as well as their developmental level. Furthermore, lessons must be created as active educative experiences. These are themes that he later develops more fully in *Democracy and Education* (1916), *The School and Society* (1899), and *Experience and Education* (1938). In *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902) Dewey addresses the relational aspects of learning between the child and the teacher. In his view, the teacher serves as a guide, providing direction for the child that begins with the child and has no pre-determined end point—the child and the curriculum are always in transition.

definition. She sees this exclusion of women as a structural problem and not a mere oversight. The exclusion is rooted in a distinction, drawn between the productive and reproductive processes of society. As she describes them, the productive processes include economic, political, social, and cultural processes such as the production of goods, the exercise of government, and the conduct of military affairs, activities considered to belong to the public world. These are most frequently associated with men, but can in fact be undertaken by women (and sometimes are). The reproductive processes of society include caring for and rearing the young, the provision of health care, tending to the needs of family members and running the household, activities considered to belong to the domestic sphere. These processes are normally associated with women, but men can also engage in them (and sometimes do). The reason for these roles being associated with either men or women has to do with the social construct of gender in our society.

Martin sees education (schooling) as being shaped by the needs of the public world, the world of production, and the men who occupy it. The needs of the private world, the world of reproduction, and of the women who inhabit it are excluded from the ideal of the “educated person.” Yet the dispositions and knowledge needed to carry out the reproductive processes are not innate and do not develop naturally, according to Martin. If they are not natural to women, neither are they beyond the reach of men. Both men and women can and need to engage in them; and both men and women need education to engage in them. In today's world of women increasingly working outside the home, such education of men as well as women is necessary for equalizing relations

between men and women. Such education may also have positive effects in a world of seemingly increasing violence toward girls and women and disrespect for minorities, the poor, and even nature. The goal is to reach the point of educating both men and women for the roles of both the public and private spheres.

Martin engages a range of issues frequently overlooked or downplayed that she believes are in need of urgent attention: education for family life, civility, domesticity, social justice, as well as caring, concern, and connection (the 3Cs). She argues that we have a tendency to see these issues, and particularly the 3Cs, as a barrier to preparation for membership in the public world (traditional goal of education). Martin emphasizes the need to change the value hierarchy¹⁰ underlying the purposes of education: she claims that from kindergarten through graduate school, education is gender-related, and the traits acquired in education that are most highly valued in society are genderized in favor of men and to the disadvantage of women. Martin explains that this places women in a no-win situation or a “double bind:” “A female who has acquired the traits of an educated person will not be evaluated positively for having them, while one who has acquired those traits for which she will be positively evaluated will not have achieved the ideal” (1981, p. 104). Additionally, Martin claims that today's pro-male, pro-productive sphere value structure is reflected not only in our ideal of the educated person but also in the curriculum: an educated person will not need to know anything

¹⁰ “Value is attached to being an educated person: to the things an educated person knows and can do; to the tasks and activities that person is equipped to perform. The exclusion of education for reproductive processes from the ideal of the educated person thus carries with it an unwarranted negative value judgment about the tasks and activities, the traits and dispositions which are associated with them” (Martin, 1981, p. 107).

about the lives of women and their historical contributions nor the works of art and literature they have created. To be educated, then, both men and women must “acquire cognitive perspectives through which one sex is perceived on its own terms and one sex is perceived as the Other” (Martin, 1981, p. 104). Thus, both men and women can achieve the ideal, but women suffer for doing so and men do not. However, Martin does suggest that both men and women are harmed (though in different ways) by an education that is so narrowly defined as a result of dissociating “mind from body, thought from action, and reason from feeling and emotion” (1981, p. 104). Essentially, it only develops partial people, since both sexes do in fact participate in both the productive and reproductive processes of society. It produces people who are ill equipped to fill many of the caring roles that are central to our lives and require dispositions, knowledge, and skills that are not innate for either sex.

Tackling this problem of pro-male bias, according to Martin, calls for a redefinition of the educated person, and the traits generally associated with women (the 3Cs) need to be included in any such redefinition. There needs to be an integration of the productive and reproductive processes and values. She sees the general aim as being to unite thought and action, reason and emotion, and self and other. She claims Dewey attempted this, but his failure to understand the workings of gender made it impossible (Martin, 1985). So long as women remain invisible in the educational realm, we cannot adequately answer the question of what constitutes an educated person.

The general scope of Martin's ideal is that of a complete education; the emphasis is upon promoting practical education, with special reference to the 3Cs, or

education for family life and the values associated with the world of women and the private home. Martin is very clear that the alternative to a sex-biased educational ideal is not a gender-free ideal. Instead, she promotes a “gender-sensitive ideal” that takes sex and gender into account when it makes a difference. Sex and gender make a difference, according to Martin, when they affect the way people are perceived and evaluated and when they affect the way people think, learn, and experience the world. For Martin, then, a gender-sensitive ideal is one that incorporates the traits, dispositions, knowledge, and skills of both the productive and reproductive processes and a curriculum that is inclusive of the contributions to human life of both men and women. “Such an ideal would truly be gender-just” (Martin, 1981, p. 109).

Sex Role Theory Emerges

At the same time that difference feminists were changing moral and political philosophy with conceptions around care and challenging traditional ideals around the aims of schooling, gender theory in social science was advancing. The term “gender” was first used in the 1970s to counter biological essentialism by highlighting the cultural variability of gender; sex remained fixed, and the emphasis was on the non-essentialism of gender (Oakley, 1997). This was the beginning of social constructionist accounts of gender identity and was one of the key conceptual tools of second wave feminism. Based on extensive work around the general concept of “role” in the field of psychology, “sex role” theory emerged as the predominant conception of gender and its subsequent impact on education is clear.

Sex role theory provides a framework for understanding individual behavior in social relations.¹¹ The basic idea is that being a man or a woman means performing gender in a way consistent with what is socially expected of one's sex—the “sex role.” “There are, accordingly, always two sex roles in a given context, the ‘male role’ and the ‘female role’; less commonly but equivalently called ‘man’s role’ or ‘woman’s role’, the ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine role’, etc” (Connell, 1987, p. 48). Sex role theories contend that gender differences exist because children are socialized for particular roles in society by learning and internalizing appropriate ways of behaving through observation and/or experiencing positive feedback for conforming behaviors and negative feedback for nonconforming behaviors. For example, through socialization, girls learn and acquire the traits to be nurturing, selfless, passive, and dependent, while boys learn to be aggressive, independent, and competitive (Oakley, 1972; Seidler 1989).

This conception of gender was a significant shift from biological assumptions about sex differences that emphasized gender differences as natural. Instead, sex roles theory explains gender differences as responses to social expectations. Additionally, since sex role theory attempts to explain social relations, it connects social structure with individual behavior. As such, sex role theory led to researchers’ interest in examining the institutions and people responsible for socialization, such as the family, mothers, schools, and teachers. Additionally, sex role theory provided principles for political reform. If the subordination of women largely stems from role expectations, then the obvious path for reform is to change and challenge social expectations. Sex

¹¹ To a large degree, sex role theory continues to be the conventional understanding of gender, which will be addressed in the following chapter.

role theory has significantly influenced contemporary feminism, particularly liberal feminism, especially in relation to the schools through reform efforts such as counter-sexist curricula and pedagogies, anti-discrimination laws, and equal educational opportunity policies.

Sex role and socialization theories supported many of the strategies aimed at redressing gender inequalities in schooling for girls—addressing biased pedagogy, counseling, and course selection—during the 1970s and 1980s. Through these strategies, schools tried to eliminate the gender bias and stereotyping that developed different traits in boys and girls and socialized students for particular roles. “The new feminism of the 1970s not only gave voice to women’s concerns, it challenged all assumptions about the gender system and raised a series of problems about men” (Connell, 2000, p. 3). Following the feminist concern about sex role socialization, some researchers pursued concerns about boys and men, addressing issues, such as “the familial, social, economic, and physical aspects of men’s lives in connection with labor, emotional disconnection, health concerns, divorce and custody disputes, body image, and violence, among other things” (Weaver-Hightower, 2003a, p. 475).¹²

In the latter part of the 1980s, sociologists and anthropologists were developing more fluid social constructionist accounts of gender that were critical of sex role theory. Some researchers in the field of education were grappling with the tension between

¹² According to Marcus Weaver-Hightower, the influence of feminist sex role and socialization theories extended to many works addressing men and boys, including “educationalists (e.g., D. Sadker, 1977), mythopoetic writers of the late 1980s and early 1990s (e.g., Bly, 1990; Keen, 1991; Moore & Gillette, 1990), or even antifeminist writers (e.g., Farrell, 1993)” (2003a, p. 475).

social structure and human agency in gender identity development (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990; Riddell, 1989). They were finding that sex role theory couldn't account for the active role that individuals play in the construction of gender identities and that different constructions of gender are imbued with varying levels of social status, prompting the trend toward plural terminology for gender ("masculinities" and "femininities") (Connell, 1987).

In a very careful longitudinal ethnography that followed the lives of a group of university women heading into the workforce in the 1980s, Dorothy Holland and Margaret Eisenhart (1990) show the limitations of sex role theory, demonstrating the need for social and gender theories that, while not dismissing the role of structure, look carefully at human agency to understand the various shapes that young women's interactions with patriarchy and gender inequality can take. Their work shows that even with increased educational opportunities, young educated women still make "choices" that would seem to reinforce sexual inequality and patriarchy rather than resist it. They especially develop our understanding of the concept of *resistance* to the gender hierarchy, showing that women's patterns of resistance differ from working class resistance to class-based oppression. The primary difference, they find, has to do with the role of the peer network. As Holland and Eisenhart explain, "for class, the ideologies and practices promulgated by the school and reflected in texts and classroom materials are the targets of working class oppression. For gender, agemates are more virulent purveyors of gender privilege than school authorities and school materials" (1990, p. 8).

Any resistance to the peer network and the system of gender relations tended to be made individually and privately and in an unfocused way, as opposed to publicly organized resistance to gender oppression. Additionally, some resistance was aimed at factions within the peer network, which tended to be coed. Therefore, action and resistance were not based on a social group identity as women. Understanding this difference not only advanced gender theory, but also helps with constructing possibilities for practices in educational settings and a politics for challenging patriarchy. What it suggests is that political and practical strategies for challenging inequitable gender relations must engage with young men and women and target the culture of the peer group as well as institutional structures. In the school setting, there must be opportunities for critical dialogue about the peer group and supports in place to help women and men recognize, grapple with, and contest hegemonic conceptions of femininity and masculinity. Accordingly, it is in the terrain of everyday life where patriarchy is most influential and that is where a concerted effort must take place.¹³

Also in the late 1980s, post-structuralist accounts of gender identity emerged and addressed the limitations of sex role theory, providing a new account of power and power relations through discourse analysis that views the self as fluid and constructed through shifting and competing discourses (Davies, 1989; Walkerdine, 1988, 1989, 1990; Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989; Weedon, 1987). “The fixity of gender roles and of the humanist view of the individual evoked by sex role theory’s notions of reproduction of

¹³ It is important to note that without this important work, much of the “transformational” scholarship that is discussed in the next chapter would not be possible. This opened the door for thinking about boys and masculinity in the way I describe it in the next chapter.

roles grew increasingly problematic for feminists working in education” (Skelton and Francis, 2009). But despite the emerging theories critical of gender sex role theory, it maintained its dominance and had the greatest impact on educational practice and policy, the effects of which still linger today.

Conflicting Contexts: Politics Shift Right

Coincident with advances in gender theory and moral and political philosophy and with changes in educational practices that were affecting the structure of schools and girls’ experiences and opportunities in schools, the political shift to the right with the election of the Reagan-Bush administration slowed the momentum and even reversed some progress of federal policies aimed at increasing gender equity in schools. According to Stromquist (1997), “under Reagan, the state became mobilized directly and indirectly against feminism and other progressive interests, so feminists had to use the state not to promote new interests but to defend those previously achieved” (p. 42). So, while feminist educational theorists were moving beyond liberal feminist concerns to address issues of power, dominance, and oppression, and were creating new theoretical tools to continue tackling gender inequality, actual changes in policy and practice were difficult to effect in the political climate of the 1980s.

Girls Still Matter

Broad interest in girls’ educational issues resurged in the early 1990s. The catalyst was the widely publicized 1992 AAUW report¹⁴ entitled *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, which argued that the current education policy agenda and

¹⁴ The research was commissioned by the AAUW and developed by the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women.

discussions around reform ignored “girls’ issues,” such as self-esteem, gender-bias in testing, math and science achievement gaps, course taking patterns, and biased teaching practices and curriculum. The AAUW argued that issues of gender must be addressed not only as a matter of justice but also as an issue of economic survival. “To leave girls on the sidelines in discussions of educational reform is to deprive ourselves of the full potential of half of our work force, half of our citizenry, and half of the parents of the next generation” (AAUW, 1992, p. 2).

By reviewing data on achievement and participation of girls in public school pre-kindergarten to grade twelve programs, the AAUW report attempted to draw attention back to girls and make gender a topic of educational reform discussions. The authors of the report presented evidence of girls’ deficiency in math and science, continued sex-segregated course-taking patterns in vocational classes, less teacher attention for girls, and boy-biased curricular materials. They made a number of recommendations, including strengthening enforcement and support for Title IX, providing professional development for school staff around gender and equity, including women in the formal school curriculum, increasing support for girls to pursue high level courses and careers in math and science, creating equitable course-taking patterns in vocational education, using valid standardized tests without gender bias, considering the intersections of race and class with gender in educational policies and practice, and dealing with the realities of the lives of students around issues of health, safety, sexuality, and child care.

Preceding liberal feminist efforts and sex role theory heavily influenced the AAUW report. For example, they emphasized strengthening enforcement and support

of Title IX and most of the other suggestions revolved around changing social expectations for girls (and boys) through changes in curriculum, pedagogy, counseling, and course-taking patterns. The report also showed evidence of Nel Noddings's and Jane Roland Martin's influence on thinking about gender and schooling: "Schools must help girls *and* boys acquire both the relational and the competitive skills needed for full participation in the work force, family, and community" (AAUW, 1992, p. 2).

As a result of the increased attention on the educational issues of girls, the Clinton administration reauthorized WEEA in 1994.¹⁵ Additionally, practitioners began focusing attention on girls and their educational needs. Myra and David Sadker's work (1994), *Failing at Fairness*, is a very popular example of gender work in the aftermath of the AAUW report and provides support for and echoes the claims made by the AAUW. Through examples of hours of classroom observations, their work illuminates hidden (or subtle) sexism that exists in US public schools. They draw particular attention to the fact that teachers pay much more attention to boys than girls in K-12 classrooms. This seemingly minor difference in treatment between boys and girls has, they argue, devastating effects for girls in terms of self-esteem and the messages they receive about how to behave. For example, they found that girls are more likely to wait to be called on, while boys are more likely to speak out of turn without correction from the teacher, creating a classroom environment of male dominance. In addition, they found that boys were more likely to be praised, corrected, helped, and constructively criticized,

¹⁵ The reauthorization was more symbolic than anything since it was so grossly underfunded at \$5 million per year. "This, to cover a country with 15,000 local school districts, 3,500 colleges and universities, and 900 institutions of post-secondary education, amounts to an investment of \$181 per institution" (Stromquist, 1992, p. 42).

reactions that are crucial for both academic and social development and positive self-esteem. They also called attention to the bias in standardized testing and the emphasis institutions of higher education place on such exams for admissions and merit-based scholarships, giving boys an advantage even over girls with higher grade point averages. Furthermore, they discovered that curricular materials continued to exclude the experiences of women.

Interestingly, Sadker and Sadker provide an early assessment of the “boy crisis” arguing that while boys have advantages they are also at the bottom in many ways with much higher rates of failures, dropouts, grade repeats, and special education participation. They argue that these troubles are so visible that schools invest extra resources to address them and continue to ignore girls. “Girls suffer silent losses, but boys’ problems are loud enough to be heard throughout the school” (Sadker and Sadker, 1994, p. 197).

Like the AAUW report, Sadker and Sadker make recommendations influenced by sex role theory and liberal feminist politics. They, too, suggest better enforcement and support of Title IX to ensure that public schools eliminate sexism and offer equal educational opportunities by challenging social gender expectations and stereotypes for both boys and girls through curricular materials, pedagogy, and programs to support a more cooperative school climate. They also suggest implementing a great deal of professional development for teachers, counselors, and administrators around issues of gender and anti-sexist strategies.

In 1998, the AAUW released another report, *Gender Gaps: Where Schools Still Fail Our Children*, as a follow-up to the 1992 report. Through meta-analysis, they determined that while strides for more gender equity had been made, there was still work to be done, particularly around academic tracking (based on gender, class, and race), the disparate impact of standards-based teaching, and differential use of classroom technology for boys and girls. The timing of this report coincides with a shifting focus to the problems of boys in education.

The 'Boy Problem' Redux: 'Post-feminist' Times

The mid- to late-1990s saw a distinct shift in attention to boys that continues today. With the rise of large-scale school accountability schemes driven by standardized test scores as the main indicator for school success, boys' achievement relative to girls' became an issue again by highlighting shrinking gaps in math and science, where boys had the historical advantage, and increasing gaps in language arts, where girls have scored higher over time. This spurred a closer look at other issues where boys appear to be the troubled group, such as grade repetitions, dropout rates, special education participation, diagnoses of learning disabilities, disciplinary problems, and educational aspirations. At the same time, the US has seen an increase in school violence, which is almost universally perpetrated by boys. This justifiable growing concern for boys has resulted in a spate of media furor, parental pressure, practitioner efforts, policy attention, and a great deal of research with a focus on the state of boys in schools.

By the early 1990s, the social situation for men and boys was changing. As girls and women were seeing increased opportunities and a wider range of acceptable social

roles, boys and men were facing economic and work force changes. Since the 1980s, researchers have documented increased wage disparity among men, a decline in the purchasing power of the male wage, a decline in the number and proportion of “male” skilled and unskilled jobs, and a rise in “female” jobs in the growing services sector of industrialized economies like the United States (Hochschild, 1989). This situation has led researchers to look at this empirically as well as to theorize what this means for men in terms of the remaking of masculinities. Arnot et al (1999) argue that many young men have been ill equipped to handle these changes and that schools are partly to blame for this:

Young men have been expected to adapt to an increasingly unstable set of circumstances in the work sphere, threatening the conventional basis both of masculinity and its associated ideal of the male as breadwinner. Such instability has been deepened, we suggest, not by the work of schools challenging and transforming masculinity, but rather their failure to do so. While schools challenged girls to adapt to new circumstances, young men were not offered similar possibilities to adapt to social and economic change, even though the restructuring of the workplace and the family called for men with modern and more flexible approaches to their role in society. (pp. 125-126)

Arnot’s observation refers to what has been coined the “crisis of masculinity” that has erupted worldwide with shifting economies and changing gender expectations due to the globalizing economy, as well as political and cultural changes. As boys and men struggled to adapt, researchers, educators, and the general public began to express

increased concern over the rearing and schooling of boys. One response to the masculinity crisis was a factious men's movement with often-competing concerns involving a range of groups such as the mythopetic, men's rights, and pro-feminist factions. "Although relatively few American men are participants in these groups or knowledgeable about their agendas, activists' ideas are gaining a toehold in the culture" (Rhode, 1997, p. 229).

In 1991, Robert Bly's *Iron John* was the bestselling nonfiction book in the United States and is representative of the prominent mythopoetic men's movement for men to reclaim their masculinity. Through the character, Iron John, Bly takes his readers on a mythological journey through an ancient folktale: Iron John's initiation into manhood. In order to develop true masculinity and reach manhood, Iron John must disconnect himself from all females and return to a legendary place of nature, male mentors, and physical challenge. Through this fictional account, Bly is arguing that boys' spending too much time away from men and male influence is the root cause the current masculinity crisis. Furthermore, by attending feminized schools and being raised by women, boys are not adequately preparing for manhood. As such, schools and parents need to embrace boys' true nature and provide them with male mentors and "masculine" environments, curricular materials, and pedagogies. Bly does not suggest social transformation, but rather he focuses on individual growth. Through workshops and retreats, men can participate in rituals to reclaim their masculine identity.

The men's movement also had a religious faction that was quite popular. Male dominance and the legitimacy of gender hierarchy is a shared premise of groups ranging

from the religious right's "Promise Keepers" and "Jocks for Jesus" to Louis Farrakhan's "Million-Man Marchers." In these organizations, the message to men is to take their rightful place as the leaders of their family, church, and community with women in the supporting role. By the late 1990s, the "Promise Keepers" were able to attract as many as 700,000 men to their rallies, and each event made millions in profits through merchandise and instructional material sales (Rhode, 1997, p. 231).

The men's rights faction of the movement sees men as victims of feminism, especially of affirmative action and other legal mechanisms to enhance equal opportunity for women, racial minorities, and those in the lower socio-economic levels. Many men ascribing to beliefs of the men's rights movement don't see themselves as beneficiaries of a system that privileges men; they may have experienced oppression from other interrelated factors such as race and/or socio-economic class or have been passed over for jobs or lost out in a divorce battle in court. According to literature circulated by the Men's Rights Association (MRA), "Our definition of men's liberation is freedom to be (not from being) men" (in Rhode, 1997, p. 229). What they mean by being "men" is based on old essentialized notions of gender found in sociobiological conceptions. Essentially, the men's rights movement claimed that the feminist agenda forced men to abandon their natural masculinity, harming the family, and disrupting the natural gender arrangements of society.

Another faction of the men's movement is an outgrowth and ally of the feminist movement, aiming to transform masculinity and challenge traditional gender roles to be less restrictive and combat homophobia and gender-based inequality. The growing

body of men's studies scholarship heavily influenced this part of the men's movement, referred to as the pro-feminist men's movement. By the late 1990s, the pro-feminist men's movement had very little political and popular appeal, though it had the strongest theoretical foundation. According to Rhode (1997), "groups like the National Organization for Men Against Sexism numbered well under a thousand members" (p. 229). However, this faction has heavily influenced the later scholarly turn in the study of boys and schooling to be discussed at length in the next chapter.

Along with and related to the economic changes affecting men and boys and the emerging men's movements, feminist backlash was becoming apparent. Variations of the following themes are primarily heard from opponents of feminism: that feminist goals have been met (presumptive equality); that feminists exaggerate(d) women's discrimination; that feminism doesn't represent the views of women as a group; that feminism blames men for discrimination against women; that feminism ignores the importance of the family; and that feminism is anti-male. Most of these conceptions involve returning to essentialized notions of gender based on sex.

Susan Faludi (1991, 1999) refers to "backlash" as an explicit and concerted conservative response to challenge the achievements of feminism. Christina Hoff-Sommers's work exemplifies explicit backlash politics and is representative of the popular views around schooling and boys from this perspective. She writes:

The idea that schools and society grind girls down has given rise to an array of laws and policies intended to curtail the advantage boys have and to redress the harm done to girls. That girls are treated as the second sex in school and consequently

suffer, that boys are accorded privileges and consequently benefit—these are things that everyone is presumed to know. But they are not true. (2000, p. 1)

She thinks that feminism just doesn't work because it is "misguided" and wastes scarce resources by focusing on girls at the expense of boys. What it comes down to, then, is that men and women and boys and girls are simply different. She supports this by arguing that

after two major waves of feminism, women still predominate—sometimes overwhelmingly—in empathy-centered fields such as early-childhood education, social work, veterinary medicine, and psychology, while men are overrepresented in the 'systematizing' vocations such as car repair, oil drilling, and electrical engineering. (2008, p. 6)

Accordingly, feminism is a failed project because it is mistaken about how to conceive of gender, misrepresents and misinterprets data, and harms boys and men.

While Hoff-Sommers's arguments are explicitly anti-feminist and have garnered quite a bit of media attention and general popularity, in my view, another form of backlash that is subtler predominates. We have entered a time of presumed gender equality, making feminism redundant, a thing of the past and no longer necessary because the feminist project has been achieved. This is what I mean by "postfeminism," and is a widely held view among both men and women, but particularly among men.

According to recent polls, close to half of all men think that they are subject to unfair penalties for advantages that others had in the past. Two-thirds of men and three-quarters of male business leaders do not believe that women encounter significant

discrimination for top position in business, professions, or government. (Rhode, 1997, p. 3)

This view has also been called “nonfeminism” (Yob, 2000, p. 384) and “presumptive equality” (Foster, 2004). As Yob puts it, “some nonfeminists would argue that feminism is now passé, a tired form of political correctness” (2000, p. 384).¹⁶¹⁷

In terms of schooling in the US and other industrialized countries, the pervasive view is that the schools have dealt with girls’ issues and that they have achieved educational equality and even surpassed boys. Proof for this comes from comparisons of girls’ and boys’ achievement on standardized tests that show girls with a slight advantage, as well as boys’ disproportionate representation in special education and diagnoses of learning disabilities, boys’ higher rates of dropping out and grade retention, and the disciplinary problems of boys. The presumption of equality allows for schools and society to treat males and females as complementary, symmetrical populations that are equally disadvantaged and victimized. This greatly impacts the way

¹⁶ In my discussion of postfeminism, I articulate two views: antifeminism and presumed equality. I argue that presumed equality is the more pervasive view and what I mean by being in “postfeminist” times. It should also be noted that some authors refer to postfeminism as a form of “neofeminism” or the “third wave” (this is not what I mean). The “first wave” focused on the women’s suffrage movement, and the second wave emerged in the 1960s inspired in part by the civil rights movement. The “third wave” is part reaction to and part development of earlier feminisms and takes many forms, such as postcolonial feminism and antiracist feminism. Essentially, the third wave feminisms recognize the interconnectedness of social identities and the contextual nuances of terms such as *gender*, *sex*, *oppression*, *power* and *equality*. Additionally, in some strands there is a repudiation of victim status in such feminisms with an emphasis on empowerment. Some of these versions have been referred to as “girl power” feminism.

¹⁷ For more on postfeminism, see also: Dicker & Piepmeier (2003); Hall & Rodriguez (2003); Hawkersworth (2004); and Heywood & Drake (1997).

equity concerns are taken up and the way gender policies in education are being framed. This will be discussed in greater depth in later chapters.

At the turn of the century, the US political climate continued to shift right, and national policies moved away from the previous decades' concern for equity and justice in favor of strategies promoting economic growth and global competitiveness. These have resulted in an increased market orientation of educational policy based on "excellence" and individualistic, competitive, and consumerist values. The most prominent of the current educational policy schemes—vouchers, charter schools, standards, and high-stakes testing—focus on increased competition between public schools to drive improvement. Additionally, the states have instituted curriculum standards and large-scale accountability programs to measure the "success" of schools. On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (PL 107-110), reauthorizing and significantly changing the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The new ESEA greatly expands the federal role in education and sharpened the focus on market-based reforms. At the core of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) are a number of measures designed to drive broad gains in student achievement and to hold states and schools more accountable for student progress. Tied to these accountability measures is the inclusion of school choice, integrating the two policies in one federal policy for the first time. Such reforms privilege individual choice over social transformation and equity. At the same time, many programs and laws to promote equity, such as affirmative action, bilingual

education, school desegregation, and Title IX, have been challenged in the courts, weakened, and/or defunded.

Increasing federal control of education and the requirements of NCLB to target scores by all subgroups may shift attention and resources to boys, particularly poor and minority boys. Additionally, decreased federal support of women's and girls' issues under the Bush administration (i.e., closing of the White House Office of Women's Initiatives and Outreach, weakening WEEA by defunding implementation and support, cutting the budget of the Violence Against Women program, and weakening of Title IX) create conditions to increase programs for boys. With the recent election of the Obama administration, there has been no significant change in the federal role in educational policies directly addressing gender.

Conclusion

The general shift away from equity beginning in the 1980s continues today though the use of test scores and disaggregating the results has drawn attention to the cluster of boys at the bottom, which has prompted some of the concern over boys' achievement. The historical context provided in this chapter is crucial to understanding the current concern about boys because it is in part a backlash to the previous decades, but also because the previous decades set the stage for how gender issues are approached even with boys. With girls making gains in educational achievement and opportunities, we are now operating with the assumption that the social playing field is even. In these so-called postfeminist times, no longer do gender equity concerns have only to do with girls. Furthermore, in terms of education, it appears that girls now hold

an advantaged position based on extremely narrow measures of school success established by current accountability schemes.

The following chapter provides a closer examination of this historical moment in education policy and practice.

CHAPTER 3

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE NEW 'BOY CRISIS'

Beginning roughly in the mid- to late-1990s, a distinct and growing shift toward examining boys' education had occurred. Marcus Weaver-Hightower refers to this moment in education research, policy, and practice concerning gender as the "boy turn" (2003a). He calls it the "boy turn" to express two contrasting views of this particular moment. The first is that the focus on boys is deserved after decades of attention to girls at the expense of boys. The second refers to an unwelcome turn away from the continuing inequality affecting girls. According to Weaver-Hightower, "'boy turn' is a better more accurate term for the research corpus...than expressions such as the oft-heard 'What about the boys?' because [it includes] research that simultaneously focuses on boys and rejects the backlash implied by 'What about the boys?'" (2003a, p. 472). In this chapter, I provide an examination of the major positions exemplifying the "boy turn." First, I characterize the views expressed in popular-rhetorical books, media outlets, and news events. Then, I analyze two positions from scholarly sources that I call meliorative and transformational.

Essentialist Tales: Media Panic, Popular-Rhetorical Books, and News Events

The popular media-driven panic about boys in schools and society is the most visible and most resonate with the experiences and typical beliefs of parents, educators, and policymakers. The American public has been presented with numerous op-ed

pieces, a cover story in *Newsweek*, major stories in the *New Republic* and *Esquire*, a “Today Show” segment, and a PBS special (to name a few) that all tell us the same story: that while we were focusing the last several decades on “how schools shortchange girls,”¹⁸ boys were slipping through the cracks of the public education system. We’ve seen headlines such as, “Resolving the Boy Crisis in Schools,” “Help Boys Reach the Finish Line,” “Boys are No Match for Girls in Completing High School,” “Mars and Venus in the Classroom,” and “Quiet Gender Gap Hits Collegiate Balance Forcing Colleges to Practice Affirmative Action.” Numerous popular books on the subject line the shelves of bookstores and lists of online retailers. A simple Google search will lead you to, for example, Christina Hoff Sommers’ *The War Against Boys*, Paul D. Slocumb’s *Hear Our Cry: Boys in Crisis*, William Pollack’s *Real Boys*, Dan Kindlon’s and Michael Thompson’s *Raising Cain*, and Michael Gurian’s and Kathy Steven’s *The Minds of Boys: Saving Our Boys from Falling Behind in School and Life*. Each of these authors offers a different perspective and position on the “boy crisis,” but the common underlying themes are that boys are alienated by the new dominance of feminine values (masquerading as gender equality), and they need to be able to express and be proud of their innate masculinity.

The media and popular press have proffered the view that schools are, to some extent, responsible for creating the “boy crisis” because they have become “feminized” and focus so much attention on girls that they are incapable of meeting the needs of

¹⁸ A term made popular by the 1992 report from the AAUW.

boys (see, for example, Sommers, 2000).¹⁹ Among the explanations of why “feminization” is harmful to boys, according to new brain research on the differences between male and female brains (Conlin, 2003; Gurian et al., 2001; Gurian & Stevens, 2005; Pollack, 1998; Whitmire, 2006), is that boys and girls learn differently and that, accordingly, differential teaching strategies and curricula are necessary. The solution is for schools to start looking at the ways in which schools themselves, not boys nor the gender order, are the problem. In particular, schools need to accommodate boys’ learning styles, unique development, interests, and biosocial characteristics (anti-authoritarian, competitive, risk-taking, rambunctious, etc.). Schools, they argue, are trying to fit boys into an unnatural mold that has been made for girls. “Instead of straightjacketing boys by attempting to restructure [natural] behavior out of them, it would be better to teach them how to harness this energy effectively and healthily” (Conlin, 2003, p. 6).

According to Gurian and Stevens (2001, 2005), we need to educate teachers to understand the male brain and engage in appropriate pedagogy. They describe how a “boy-friendly” classroom might look:

It is often noisier than the traditional classroom. The children are not talked at for long periods of time. Self-motivated learning is supported. Visual (overheads, video) learning is accentuated. Spatial-mechanical and kinesthetic learning is given nearly equal weight as verbal learning. Reading is taught in a multi-sensory way.

¹⁹ Sommers (2000) goes so far as to declare that feminists have waged a “war against boys” by focusing on girls at the expense of boys, trying to “feminize” boys, and sending the message to boys that their “natural” maleness is bad. She claims that this is the root of the problem for boys in schools, which can also appear as general social problems.

Boys (and girls) are given books that interest them, and taught to find those books themselves. Boys in early grades do bead work or knitting in order to develop fine motor skills (believe it or not, in our model schools, elementary boys love knitting). Outdoor education is enhanced, as well as time spent in play-as-learning and art-as-learning. Aggression is not shamed, but instead channeled. (Gurian & Stevens, 2005, p. 1)

While this characterization emphasizes a less structured environment for boys, others contend that boys need more structure, discipline from authoritarian teachers, less focus on cooperation, and more competition. Suggestions for teaching boys in this vein include single-sex classrooms, a focus on literacy skills with reading materials that are boy-focused and on topics that are interesting to boys (Whitmire, 2006), and moral education²⁰ (Sommers, 2000). The general premise shared across these various recommendations is that classrooms should be designed to meet boys' interests and strengths, not just girls', from which they differ.

In addition to popular-rhetorical literature and media reports implicating schools in a general boy crisis, there is a concern about boys and violence because of a series of school shootings exemplified most dramatically by the Columbine High School massacre of 1999. Also prevalent in the news have been debates around admitting women to the Virginia Military Institute and the Citadel military college (a battle fought in the courts under Title IX) and the mid-90s "Spur Posse" scandal in which California high school boys earned points for having sex with multiple girls. "All have placed boys, their

²⁰ The moral education that Sommers argues for is about "respecting boys' masculinity" and helping them become "gentlemen."

socialization, and questions of power, privilege, and violence at the center of public attention” (Weaver-Hightower, 2003a, p. 475) and have prompted calls for schools to address the issues. Such high-profile events attract a great deal of attention and prompt demands for a response. Some interventions in schools have resulted from such reactions in the form of increased security, monitoring student behavior, and discipline (locker searches, dress codes, metal detectors, expulsions, etc.), as well as co-curricular programs on anti-violence and anti-bullying.

Scholarship and the ‘Boy Turn’

While the most vocal and visible literature has come from the media and popular books, there has been a varied scholarly response to the issue of boys and schooling that moves beyond the rhetoric of crisis stories and “gender wars” to examine the complexity of the “problem” and provide some nuanced recommendations for moving forward. As Marcus Weaver-Hightower notes, “missing in all this furor is a true contextualization of the situation for boys” (Weaver-Hightower, 2005, p. 1). In an attempt to address this lack of sophistication in the analyses found in the popular responses to the so-called “boy crisis”, the scholarly literature addresses questions such as:

- What are the actual test score trends?
- Are all boys doing poorly?
- Are all girls doing well? If not, what accounts for the differences?
- Do test scores measure equality?
- What does gender equality mean?

- What is the role of the public school in supporting gender equality?
- What is gender?
- What do we know about masculinities and the role schools play in its enactment?
- What programs, policies, and pedagogies will help boys?

The list could go on.

The following provides an overview of what I have identified as the two foremost scholarly responses to these kinds of questions: (1) the meliorative response, which is based on responding to statistical analyses of achievement and other educational data; and (2) the transformational response, which typically provides critical philosophical and sociological analyses of the larger sociopolitical context of education, underscoring the relational structures of gender that powerfully affect individuals and institutions.

Meliorative Scholarship: “A ‘Some Boys’ Crisis”²¹ and a Little Good News for Girls

Meliorative scholarship is the body of work that predominates in the scholarly response to the “boy crisis” in the United States and comes mostly from universities and policy think tanks. It generally makes claims that the rhetoric of a “boy crisis” emanating from the popular media and books misrepresents the empirical data and is overstated. This view claims that the statistics used to support the “boy crisis” are misleading in that they lump all boys together, when in fact some boys are doing exceedingly well, while others are not (Barnett & Rivers, 2006; Mead, 2006). The question, “Which boys?” rarely gets asked, and the answer to this question, the argument goes, changes the look of the “crisis” to one primarily of race and class, and

²¹ This phrase comes from Barnett & Rivers (2006).

only secondarily one of gender. Poor minority boys are struggling compared to middle class white boys, and the same is true for girls (though poor minority girls tend to do better than their male counterparts) (Mead, 2006). “Overall, there has been no radical or recent decline in boys’ performance relative to girls. Nor is there a clear overall trend—boys score higher in some areas, girls in others” (Mead, 2006, p. 6). What makes it seem otherwise is that girls are catching up to boys and surpassing them in some areas. Boys no longer hold the overall academic edge, and poor and minority boys have lost ground. Thus, poor, Black, and Hispanic boys need our special attention, as there may arguably be a “crisis” for them.

A report by the American Council on Education (2006) that examines trends in higher education supports the notion that race and class are the real issue in educational disparity.²² They assert that the gender gap in higher education attendance between male and females is due primarily to an overall increase in low-income White and Hispanic females attending college. However, they point out that despite the increase in female students, the number of bachelor’s degrees awarded to males continues to rise (as it does for females). Furthermore, the gap between whites and minorities with respect to bachelor’s degrees awarded has grown wider. As another source reveals, “across the board, Latinos and blacks of both sexes lag behind, but the

²² See also Barnett & Rivers (2006) for more discussion of the differences between boys by race and class in higher education. They point out that “overall, elite boys are doing well academically. More males than females attend Ivy League schools. And while we have been hearing that boys are virtually disappearing from college classrooms, among whites, the gender composition of colleges is pretty balanced” (pp. 1-2).

gap is more dramatic for the males” (2006, p. 2). Thus, King (the author of the ACE study) suggests:

The gender gap is important and should be addressed by educators and policy makers, but it should not obscure the larger disparities that exist by income and race/ethnicity for students of both genders. Likewise, the fact that the rate of degree attainment has risen over time for both women and men should remind everyone concerned about male achievement that education is not a zero-sum [game] in which a woman’s success results in losses for men. (King, 2006)

Furthermore, gains in educational achievement for girls don’t necessarily translate into greater workplace equity. Mason (2010) argues that even though women receive a majority of all associate, bachelor’s, and master’s degrees and nearly half of all PhDs, “structural barriers discourage women from entering into the challenging, and much higher-paid, fields of science, technology, engineering, and math” (p. 1). This is particularly concerning with our current economy emphasizing skills in advanced technology. Additionally, Mason points out that women with advanced degrees entering an academic career are often faced with inflexible workplace policies that make it difficult to balance career and family obligations, forcing many women to change career tracks.²³ Some holding the meliorative view go on to say that unless the

²³ According to Mason (2010), “Even as women have increasingly become breadwinners, however, they have not abdicated their role as family caregivers. Our research shows that the second shift is alive and well in academe. From the graduate student through the faculty ranks, academic mothers routinely put in 15 or more hours a week than fathers do. Other studies show this pattern crosses all workplaces. As a result, women bear the brunt of antiquated workplace policies. ...Denied flexibility, many women are also denied raises and promotions, with the wage gap widening as a result” (p. 2).

gains made by girls “translate into pay equity between males and females in all fields, into significantly increased post-secondary school enrollments by females in mathematics and science, and into the participation of women as students and faculty at elite institutions of higher education, those [gains] will be of little if any value” (Alperstein, 2005, p. 3). These are issues larger than the schools can handle alone, but are very important to raise as the emphasis on test scores, college admissions and degree completion rates as measures of gender equity can mask other inequitable conditions. Such an observation speaks to the need to maintain a focus on girls and women in the quest for gender equity.

Improving academic achievement.

Within the meliorative category is practice-focused work that primarily emphasizes strategies to use with boys in the school setting.²⁴ The most prevalent recent work among the practice-oriented literature on boys and schooling has been concerned with boys’ academic achievement, particularly on raising test scores in literacy where there is a very clear achievement gap in favor of girls. This emphasis on raising test scores is mostly due to the neoliberal reforms explained earlier that place a heavy emphasis on achievement scores. Thus, some scholars have been concerned with finding strategies to raise the achievement scores of boys, particularly in literacy where

²⁴ It is important to note that all of the responses to the “boy crisis” address practice to some extent. The popular-rhetorical literature has work in which the primary emphasis is on strategies to use with boys in the school setting. However, the difference is that the practice-oriented responses in the meliorative category do not rely on essentialist notions of gender, attempting to de-feminize boys and schools. In general, they approach the problem from a view consistent with the meliorative statistical analyses and with a social constructionist understanding of gender as consistent with the liberal feminist movement in schools (the main topic of Chapter Two).

there is a very clear gap. In the US context, this practice literature has mostly come from popular press books with publishers such as Stenhouse and Heinemann defining the debate. This work focuses on providing pedagogical and curricular recommendations for administrators and teachers to increase the literacy achievement of boys (often with an emphasis on boys of color). Predominant works include Fletcher's (2006) *Boy Writers: Reclaiming their Voices*, Tatum's (2005) *Teaching Reading to Black Adolescent Males: Closing the Achievement Gap*, Newkirk's (2002) *Misreading Masculinity: Boys, Literacy, and Popular Culture*, Prie's (2002) *Teenage Boys and High School English*, and Smith & Wilhelm's (2002) *'Reading Don't Fix No Chevy's: Literacy in the Lives of Young Men*.

Additionally, Mead (2006) argues that we need to better understand what is contributing to test score gaps, particularly why some boys' achievement is not increasing as fast as other boys'. This requires increased support and funding for studies about gender and education. According to Mead, such research should include proper methodological and analytic tools to look into the cause of gender achievement gaps, as well as experimental evaluations of different approaches that seek to close them" (2006, p. 19). Along with this, we need to recognize the connection between educational achievement and larger educational and social problems, specifically when linked to race/ethnicity and social class. Recognizing this will allow us to work on closing the economic and racial achievement gap, which will do more good for both boys and girls than focusing efforts on gender equality. According to Mead (2006), "we know more about these larger problems—and some of the steps we can take to address

them—than we do about gender gaps” (p. 18). Also, boys need to be educated about the long-term costs of their educational choices.

Over the past 25 years, economic opportunities for women have increased, but many require a bachelor’s degree. Families and education systems have been very clear in conveying this message to young women and encouraging them to get the education they need to be economically successful. Less educated men, however, historically have more economic opportunities than less educated women, so their incentives to get a good education are not as strong as those facing women. Many jobs traditionally held by less educated men are disappearing, or now require more education than they did a generation ago, but boys may not understand this.

(Mead, 2006, p. 19)

As a whole, the meliorative scholarship addresses some of the problems of the popular view on boys and schooling by recognizing that boys are not a homogenous group and that some, because of racial and material inequality, are facing real trouble in schools and society; recognizing that girls’ success does not come at the expense of boys’ and that there still may be issues for girls to be addressed; and leaving room for social, rather than biological, explanations for the differences among boys’ and girls’ experiences in schools and later in life. However, this body of work fails to consider larger issues of power and that gender is a fundamental issue along with race/ethnicity and class. The body of work comprising the transformational scholarship that deals with these issues is explained next.

Transformational Scholarship

The transformational scholarship addressing boys and schooling underscores the importance of philosophical and sociological foundations of education. This work predominantly comes from scholars in the UK and Australia,²⁵ where concern over boys and schooling has been most pervasive. A large body of work has been produced that mostly deals with gender construction, specifically sociological work examining masculinities within institutional and cultural contexts (Brod, 2002; Brod & Kaufman, 1994; Clatterbaugh, 1996; Connell, 1987, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2005; Foster, 1994; Gardiner, 2002; Keddi, 2006a, 2006b; Keddie & Mills, 2007; Kenway & Willis, 1998; Lingard & Douglas, 1999; Lingard, Martino, & Mills, 2009; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Martino, Kehler, & Weaver-Hightower, 2009; Noble & Bradford, 2000; Reed, 1999; Ringrose, 2007; Skelton & Francis, 2009; Weaver-Hightower, 2003a, 2003b, 2005, 2008; Yates, 1997). R.W. Connell²⁶ and other profeminists and feminists have led the way, particularly by employing a “relational model” that theorizes gender (including

²⁵ In Australia, there have been federal initiatives and policy to deal with the issue of boys and schooling. In 2002, the federal government released a report called “Boys: Getting it Right,” which has resulted in federal policy. Australia is the first and only country to have federal policy on boys, though most of the Western developed countries (such as the US, Canada, and the UK) have seen similar headlines of crisis and boy troubles that are translated into educational problems. See Weaver-Hightower (2008) for an extensive examination of the situation in Australia and the lessons to apply for other similar countries.

²⁶ I chose to appeal to Connell because she has figured so predominantly in the discussions around boys and schooling. Her work on masculinities and gender and power is typically the springboard for others addressing this topic. Indeed, her work and that of other profeminists who are exemplary of the “transformational” literature in the boy turn would not be possible without the earlier work of feminists, like those discussed in Chapter Two. It is apparent that their feminist predecessors heavily influence the scholars who are most active in the transformational literature on boys and schooling.

masculinities) as a set of structural social positions. I briefly address two broad themes that have emerged as the most significant contributions of the transformational perspective: (1) relational understanding of gender that accounts for power dynamics within and between genders and (2) masculinities as an important aspect of gender.

Relational understanding of gender.

Gender is “omni-present” (Beck, 1992). Every institution in our society (schools, families, workplaces, etc.) is infused with gender dynamics that are both created and reinforced. Gender is a social construct, developed by human beings as a way of dividing up the world and making sense of it. As such, gender is not fixed by nature, but varies based on time, place, and culture. Thus, what it means to be a man or woman is constantly changing. Finally, gender is a real, lived experience. As Bradley (2007) explains:

Gender is at the same time both a material and a cultural phenomenon. It refers both to the lived experiences of men and women in relation to each other and to the ideas we develop to make sense of these relations and to frame them. Material experiences inform cultural meanings, which in turn influence the way lived relations change and develop. (p. 4)

So, gender is a complex phenomenon that affects all aspects of our lives—how we culturally define “men” and “women” or “male” and “female” or “other” and what this classification means in terms of social positioning.

As I discussed earlier in Chapter Two, the predominant theory of gender influencing education research, policy, and practice has been sex role socialization

theories, emphasizing particular social expectations for boys and girls. Liberal feminists sought to challenge these norms by exposing them as irrational and/or oppressive and gaining changes in law and practice to provide alternative socialization, particularly to expand opportunities for girls. However, liberal feminists did not give attention to structural sources of inequality that significantly impact equality of opportunity. As such, this particular brand of liberal feminist theory is insufficient for accounting for the complexities of femininities and masculinities (especially in terms of intersections with race/ethnicity, class, and sexuality), understanding issues of power, violence, and material inequality, and offers little in the way of strategies for change.

According to Connell, there are three structures that govern gender relations: the structure of labor, which governs production relations; the structure of power, which governs relations of power; and the structure of cathexis, which governs emotional and symbolic relations. Connell addresses each structure separately for analytical purposes. However, in practice they constantly intermingle and interact.

The structure of labor that governs production relations within the gender order of society varies by context (point in history, culture, geographic location, etc.). This structure delineates gender divisions of labor in which men perform certain tasks and women others. Gender divisions between jobs are not the whole of gender divisions of labor as there is a large division between “work” (paid labor and production for markets) and “home” (wherein caretaking and other unpaid labor is done). The whole economic sphere is socially defined as men’s (regardless of women’s participation in it), while domestic life is socially defined as women’s (regardless of men’s participation in

it). What it means to be a man or a woman is often associated with these divisions of labor. From these structural differences flow characteristically different experiences for men and women and even influence our ideas about the “natures” of men and women. Some say production relations are the basis for the current gender order and affect the other structures as well as the gender regimes of institutions.

The structure of power delineates the kinds of power relations that operate based on gender. According to Connell, “there is both organized, institutional power and diffuse, discursive power” (2002, p. 59). Power operating through institutions is manifested as power in the form of oppression, resulting in men as a social group having oppressive power over women as a social group. This can be seen in a variety of institutional structures, such as policies around family leave, child care, or promotion that favor men as a group over women for prestigious and better paying positions. The other conception of power as diffuse and discursive was developed by Foucault (1979) and suggests that the ways we communicate and conceptualize exacts a subtle and personal form of power that has real consequences for individual identity and sense of place in the world. Making the theoretical move to combine these two understandings of power relations allows Connell to develop a more robust account of power than when understood as one conception or the other. However, gendered power (like all social power) is not totalizing, and both forms of gendered power can be and are contested. For example in the US, the Suffrage Movement successfully contested an oppressive law that kept women from voting and realizing equal citizenship. Also,

people can challenge gender discourses that exert power of one group over another, such as the discourses around female beauty.

What Connell calls “cathexis” refers to the structure of emotional and symbolic relations that are often interwoven with the division of labor and power (e.g., in the figures of the father or the mother). Emotional relations may be positive or negative, loving or hostile (or all at the same time) and are predominant in sexual relations, though they are found in many contexts, spanning families to the workplace. For example, prejudice and care are both emotional relations. Symbolic relations are understandings, implications, overtones, and illusions that are infused with gender meanings, which, in turn, infuse the social practice of interpreting the world. Whenever we hear the word “man” or “woman,” we call on our gender meanings to understand these terms. Gender symbolism operates in a variety of ways, for example through language (speech and writing), dress, makeup, gesture, popular culture, and the built world. Understanding cathexis helps us to understand why gender arrangements are so difficult to change. To do so involves not just changing a few attitudes, but a whole system of communication and meaning.

As is apparent from the discussion above, gender hierarchy is not a homogenous whole. Instead, there are multiple dimensions in gender relations. It is important to recognize the complexity within the gender system; gender relations are internally complex, involving multiple structures. Such recognition allows us to see how structural inequality creates gender-based oppression, but also how gender serves as a source of resistance and pleasure. “Gender arrangements are thus, at the same time, sources of

pleasure, recognition and identity, and sources of injustice and harm. This means that gender is inherently political—but it also means that politics can be complicated and difficult” (Connell, 2002, p. 6). Also, the structures of relations constantly intermingle and interact in practice.

A structure of relations does not mechanically determine how people or groups act, but it certainly defines possibilities and consequences. As Connell explains, “human practice always presupposes social structure, in the sense that practice necessarily calls into play social rules or resources. Structure is always emergent from practice and is constituted by it. Neither is conceivable without the other” (1987, pp. 94). Additionally, Connell points out that practice is always responding to a situation. “Since the consequence of practice is a transformed situation which is the object of new practice, ‘structure’ specifies the way practice (over time) constrains practice” (Connell, 1987, p. 95). Practice cannot escape structure; it cannot “float free” from its circumstances. For example, gay men are not free to adopt any sexual life they please without social consequences. Often, the only practicable alternative is being closeted.

The three structures of gender relations make up the *gender order* of society, which is manifested within institutions as *gender regimes*. Schools have particularly clear gender regimes that may differ between schools, but are limited by the wider culture and gender order. There are practices that construct various kinds of femininity and masculinity and some gender patterns (e.g., forms of masculinity and femininity) are hegemonic and others are subordinate. This hierarchy of gender patterns constitute the structure of power. In schools this can be seen through the association of

masculinity with authority, as well as the concentration of men in supervisory positions.

Among students, power relations may also be visible between and within genders through patterns of dominance, harassment, and control over resources. Schools also have a distinct, though not absolute, division of labor (constituting the structure of labor) that is directly related to power relations. This is clearly visible in work specializations among teachers, such as concentrations of women in elementary, domestic science, language and literature teaching, and men in secondary, science, math, and industrial arts teaching. Additionally, informal specializations among students, from the gendered choice of electives to the ways in which teachers ask female and male students to play different roles in class (the female note-taker and the male to help keep the lines in order, for example) exemplify structural labor relations in schools. Finally, schools have an ideology about sexual behavior and character (constituting the structure of cathexis). This typically concerns sexuality and is seen through explicit heteronormativity and often homophobia. Schools adopt many of the same symbolic relations as the wider culture, though they also have their own systems too in terms of uniforms, dress codes, and informal language codes. The symbolism of gender also affects the gendering of knowledge that in turn affects the labor relations through, for example, defining certain areas of the curriculum, such as math and science, as masculine and others, such as literature and art, as feminine.

The gender regimes of particular institutions are part of wider patterns and usually correspond to the overall gender order, but may depart from it. This is important for change. Some institutions are better sites for change. Some institutions

change quickly, while others are slow to change. Change often starts in some places of society and seeps in to others over time. Public schools are a strategic place to attempt to tackle changing gender relations. They are much easier institutions of socialization to regulate than families. Additionally, in the long run, changes in the gender regimes of schools will find their way to other institutions, like families, as children are socialized to relate in different ways, thereby affecting the gender order of society.

Through these intersecting structures of relations, schools create institutional definitions of masculinity and femininity. According to Connell, “Such definitions are impersonal; they exist as social facts. Pupils participate in these masculinities [and femininities] simply by entering the school and living in its structures. The terms on which they participate, however, are negotiable—whether adjusting to the patterns, rebelling against them, or trying to modify them” (2000, p. 154).

What does all this mean in terms of a better understanding of the current “boy crisis” in American public schools? First of all, it provides a framework for thinking about the gender issues in education generally, and the education of boys specifically. It allows us to see students as gendered agents within the setting of the school and schools as constraining the making of gender by students. This understanding provides new ways of looking at schooling as an integral site of the struggle for gender justice.

Masculinities.

Along with providing a relational understanding of gender, the transformational scholarship on boys and schooling has emphasized the importance of theorizing masculinities as an important aspect of gender. In doing so, the predominant

transformational literature (see, for example, Awkward, 2002; Martino, Kehler, Weaver-Hightower, 2009; Robinson, 2000, 2002; and Weaver-Hightower, 2003a, 2003b, 2005, 2008) draws heavily from Connell's framework of gender as a structure of relations, including the concept of multiple masculinities (1987; 2000; 2002). According to Connell, there is a societal hierarchy of the various forms of masculinity and femininity, and the interrelation between masculinities and femininities is based on the global dominance of men over women. "This structural fact provides the main basis for relationships among men that define a hegemonic²⁷ form of masculinity in the society as a whole. 'Hegemonic masculinity' is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women" (Connell, 1987, p. 183). Hegemonic masculinity is distinguished from a universal male sex role in that the cultural ideal(s) of masculinity are not necessarily consistent with the personalities of the majority of men. Even so, many men participate in maintaining the ideal even if most don't measure up. Connell explains that "the public face of hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily what powerful men are, but what sustains their power and what large numbers of men are motivated to support" (1987, p. 185). Most scholars among those studying boys and schooling from the transformational perspective argue that

²⁷ Connell borrows the term 'hegemony' from Gramsci's analyses of class relations in Italy. Connell uses the term to mean "a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes" (1987, p. 184). This ascendancy is embedded in religious doctrine and practice, mass media content, wage structures, welfare/taxation policies, and so forth, but it does not translate into total dominance. Rather, there is always a state of play with groups subordinated, but not eliminated. This accounts for everyday contestation that happens in social life, as well as historical shifts in definitions of gender patterns.

“hegemonic masculinity,” which subordinates women and distributes power unevenly among men, is the root of the boys’ problems in schools and explains to some extent why certain boys are doing worse than others.

Schools offer a particular masculinizing setting through subjects, discipline, and activities that is more conducive to some masculinities than others. Some aspects of the school’s functioning shape masculinities indirectly, and may have the effect of not producing one masculinity, but of emphasizing differences between masculinities.

According to Connell:

The competitive academic curriculum, combined with tracking, streaming, or selective entry, is a powerful social mechanism that defines some pupils as successes and others as failures, broadly along social class lines. There are strong reactions among the pupils to this sorting-and-sifting, whose gender dimension has been visible (though not always noticed). (2000, p. 160)

The academic and disciplinary hierarchy of schools thus influences the making of plural masculinities in a structured gender regime among boys, rather than a single pattern of masculinity (Connell, 1996; 2000; 2005).

Masculinities are actively constructed, not simply straightforwardly internalized; society, school, and peer groups make boys an offer of a place in the gender order, but boys determine how they “take up the offer” (Connell, 2000) in the school gender *regime*, which is in part determined by the gender *order*. The majority of boys learn to negotiate school discipline with little trouble. A certain number, however, take the discipline system as a challenge, especially in peer networks that make a heavy

investment in ideas of toughness and confrontation. Connell calls these performances of masculinity “protest masculinities” (2000; 2005). “Taking up the offer” is a crucial to understanding boys’ behavioral problems in schools and their involvement in violence and sexual harassment. Boys engage in these behaviors, not because they are driven by testosterone, as in essentialist conceptions, but in order to attain status or distinction. Misbehavior, then, becomes central to the making of masculinity when boys lack other means for obtaining these ends. This pattern of “protest masculinity” is related to high levels of conflict, poor academic achievement, placement in special education, and dropping out. These also happen to be the concerns in discussions about the “boy crisis.” As we know, these are particularly problems for poor and minority boys.

The active construction of masculinity does not necessarily lead to conflict with the school. There are forms of masculinity that are much more compatible with the school’s educational program and disciplinary system, such as career-oriented middle class masculinities, which stress competition through academic achievement and knowledge rather than physical opposition and challenge. “It seems likely that the construction of masculinities which emphasize responsibility and group cohesion, rather than aggression and individuality, has helped in the educational success of youths from Chinese and Japanese ethnic backgrounds in North America” (Connell, 2000, p. 163). The schools as currently organized are a resource for these boys, and they, in turn, are an asset for their schools.

Connell’s account of performances of masculinities contrasts with essentialist accounts of gender found in the popular literature as well as the meliorative scholarship

on boys and schooling. Connell (2000) refers to these other views as “categorical theory” of gender in which men and women are treated as preformed categories. Biological essentialism is one form where bodily differences between boys and girls (reproductive, brain variations, etc.) are linked to a character dichotomy:²⁸ boys and men are supposed to have one set of character traits and girls and women another. This has been challenged both theoretically and empirically. Feminist theorists and others concerned with social change dismiss biological determinism as fatalistic. As Alison Jaggar (1983) explains, such theories “claim that we must adapt society to take account of whatever basic, human propensities they assert, or else they claim that a society closely resembling the presently existing one is inevitable” (p. 107). Additionally, she points out that these theories are incoherent because “we cannot say abstractly that biology determines society, because we cannot identify a clear non-social sense of ‘biology’ nor a clear, non-biological sense of ‘society’” (p. 111). As such, she argues for a historical and dialectical conception of human nature that can account for the complexity of social relations and organization. This understanding recognizes that masquerades of naturalness erase human agency and the possibility of change.

Categorical theory is also the conceptual framework of gender underlying quantitative “sex difference” literature, wherein statistics are used to contrast boys and girls, such as on test scores, dropout rates, course-taking patterns, and special education classification. The categorical approach may capture important distinctions between

²⁸ This phrase comes from Connell (2002). This character dichotomy is the justification for teaching boys and girls differently and even separating them. It is also the underlying argument behind the assertion that boys cannot function in the feminized institutions that are American public schools.

groups, but it falls short on addressing the complexities within categories. In terms of empirical research, Connell (2002) explains that meta-analysis has clarified that the broad conclusion of the body of research around sex differences is that

across a wide range of the traits and characteristics measured by psychology, sharp gender differences are rare. Small differences or no differences are common. The concept of character dichotomy, as a basis of gender, is decisively refuted. Broad similarity between women and men is the main pattern. (p. 46)

Thus, the argument that boys and girls as distinct and preformed categories are inherently different with different psychological traits that need to be addressed through sex specific pedagogies is dubious. Instead, according to Connell and others holding the transformational view, the emphasis should be on a relational understanding of gender. In the case of understanding the issue of boys and schooling, it is necessary to address the various forms of masculinities resulting from configurations of practice within gender relations.

The making of masculinities in schools is a multifaceted process involving complex negotiations between developing children (both in groups and individually) and a powerful institution, also shaped by class and ethnicity and producing diverse outcomes. In some areas of school life, masculinizing practices are striking. In others, they are practically invisible. The school intends some masculinizing effects, whereas others are not wanted at all but still occur.

Connell's work and that of others engaged in the transformational approach to addressing the complicated issue of boys and schooling has been extremely important

for increasing awareness about the subject positions of masculinities and how they are created and maintained within schools through social relations and practices, texts, institutional structures, and larger political and economic processes. Weaver-Hightower observes that:

Connell's work has been instrumental in charting the various characteristics and interests that define types of masculinities and, more important, has given theorists and teachers a way to surpass the simple male-female dualism that seems anemic to explain some girls' apparent power and some boys' apparent powerlessness.

(2003b, p. 414)

Social, psychological, and pedagogical interventions.

While most work within the transformational response rarely addresses practical implications and is somewhat inaccessible for educators because of language, there is a small body of work primarily concerned with practice through social and psychological interventions aimed at helping boys develop strategies for combating sexism and engaging boys in anti-violence education. The predominant examples dealing with schools specifically within this category come from the UK and Australia (Brown & Fletcher, 1995; Davies et al, 1994; Denborough, 1996; Salisbury & Jackson, 1996; Katz & Jhally, 1999; Mills, 2001). In the US, Jackson Katz (1999, 2000; 2003; 2006) provides some resources and professional development for working with boys (particularly within sports and the military) to overcome stereotyping, challenge sexism, and combat bullying and male violence. This practice-focused work mostly deals with applying the

theoretical concepts around gender and masculinity found in the other transformational literature discussed earlier.

This work primarily deals with strategies for anti-violence and anti-sexist education. It examines curricular and programmatic interventions for boys, sex roles, overcoming stereotyping, challenging sexism, and combating bullying and male violence (e.g., Davies et al, 1994; Denborough, 1996; Jackson & Salisbury, 1996; Katz & Jhally, 1999; Katz, 2000; Mills, 2001). One of the best examples of this category is Salisbury and Jackson's book (1996), *Challenging Macho Values*. According to Weaver-Hightower (2003b):

[The book] covers a vast array of issues that affect adolescent boys, including sexuality (see also Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1995), sexual harassment (see also Stein & Sjostrom, 1994; Kenway & Willis, 1998), violence and bullying, media education (Katz & Jhally, 1999), language, male body image, sports, and emotional and physical well-being—the multiple concerns of boyswork educators in a single volume. (p. 413)

Likewise, Browne & Fletcher's Australian collection (1995), *Boys in Schools*, addresses a range of issues related to boys' experience in school, such as sexuality, bullying, and peer relations, and recommends ways for teachers and administrators to respond in terms of pedagogy, classroom environment, and activities for boys.

Taken as a whole, the practice-oriented literature grounded in the transformational framework suggests a number of pedagogical and programmatic approaches for dealing with boys' issues in schools. These include the following:²⁹

- reforming the whole-school instead of implementing isolated programs (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1995; Frater, 1998; Noble, 1998);
- taking into account the gender of the teacher(s) conducting gender-specific programs (Denborough, 1996; McLean, 1996; Katz, 2000; Mills, 2000);
- designing teacher education and professional development around gender dynamics and strategies for dealing with boys (Askew & Ross, 1988; Davison & Edwards, 1998; Katz, 2000; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1995; Terry & Terry, 1998);
- adopting gender-sensitive curricular materials (Kimmel, 1996; Evans & Davies, 2000; Kuzmic, 2000); and
- employing critical literacy to teach boys about gender construction (Alloway & Glibert, 1997; Young, 2000; Brozo, 2002).

As the list above shows, the practice-oriented literature covers a range of topics and strategies pertinent to raising the achievement of boys and implementing interventions in schools and classrooms to counter sexism and improve the school climate. It has the possibility of providing theoretically supported practical solutions for addressing gender relations in the schools in teaching, school structure, and policy, thereby improving education for all students and contributing to more equitable gender regimes and the larger gender order.

²⁹ Weaver-Hightower (2003b) provides an extensive review of the practice-oriented literature cited in this list.

Conclusion

In Chapter Four, I focus on developing a social justice perspective to ground the transformational perspectives. As such, the next chapter provides an important addition to the work that has primarily focused on gender relations without clearly and/or sufficiently articulating a conception of justice. Doing so will both improve our understanding of gender issues in education and make the development of policy more cogent.

CHAPTER 4

JUSTICE, GENDER, AND SCHOOLING: A CRITICAL APPROACH

If we are not pursuing gender justice in the schools, then we are not offering boys a good education—though we may be offering them certain privileges. Boys' programs are appropriately located in gender equity programs when those are based on a general social justice framework.

—R.W. Connell (1996)

The transformational scholarship discussed in the previous chapter provides, in my view, the most promising resource for addressing the complexities of gender in schooling and promoting social justice more generally. However, while a social justice approach has been explicitly advocated among transformational scholars, it has not been sufficiently articulated or theorized. Moreover, the meliorative perspective and the popular-rhetorical responses, while not explicitly working from a justice perspective, have underlying assumptions about justice in their work. The primary aim of this chapter is to elucidate a self-conscious, defensible theory of justice to ground the transformational perspectives and critically analyze and inform educational policy and practice vis a vis gender. Doing so will both improve our understanding of gender issues in education and make the development of policy more cogent.

I revisit and evaluate the major thrusts of Chapters Two and Three—the focus on girls, the backlash and boy turn, and developments in scholarship—in terms of general theories of justice they presuppose. In order to do this, I begin by explicating two

predominant conceptions of justice on the current scene, the distributive and recognition paradigms.³⁰ After that, I expound a critical conception of justice informed by Nancy Fraser that attempts to bring the two paradigms together³¹ by re-conceiving recognition using a *status model* and invoking *participatory parity* as the unifying normative concept.

Two Paradigms of Justice

Distributive conceptions of justice are concerned with the fair allocation of resources, opportunities, and goods. In this view, justice requires measures that equalize the distribution of social benefits, thereby remedying the injuries resulting from maldistribution. Conceptions of justice emphasizing recognition deal with overcoming the stigmatization of depreciated cultures, identities, ways of life, and social contributions that result from institutionalized disrespect that is not reducible to maldistribution. In this view, justice requires the recognition of group identities.

Distribution

The distributive paradigm has supplied the chief approach for analyzing justice claims in modern times. The concept of “redistribution” has deep roots in late-twentieth-century Anglo-American derivative of the liberal tradition and was

³⁰ This certainly is not a complete account as that would be a tremendous undertaking outside the scope of this dissertation. Instead, I have identified two central categories for analyzing predominant contemporary theories of justice that help me in my primary project of bringing forth the underlying justice commitments in the work around gender and education, as well as identifying a conception of justice to help guide educational policy and practice vis a vis gender.

³¹ These two conceptions of justice have both a philosophical and a political reference, and I engage with both. Philosophically, they refer to normative paradigms developed by political theorists and moral philosophers. Politically, they refer to types of claims raised by political actors and social movements in the public sphere.

comprehensively developed in the 1970s and 1980s by renowned political philosophers, such as John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin, who sought to integrate the traditional liberal emphasis on individual liberty with the egalitarianism of social democracy. Rawls' theory was developed in *A Theory of Justice* (1971) and *Political Liberalism* (1993) and later refined in *Justice as Fairness* (2001). According to Rawls, social justice concerns the "basic structure of society, or more exactly, the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation" (1971, p. 6). Rawls emphasized justice as fairness in the distribution of "primary goods"³² and Dworkin argued that justice requires "equality of resources" (1981)³³. However, distributive theories of justice vary greatly

³² According to Rawls, primary goods are social conditions and general means to enable citizens to develop and exercise their two moral powers. Primary goods are "things needed and required by persons seen in the light of the political conception of persons, as citizens who are fully cooperating members of society, and not merely as human beings apart from any normative conception" (Rawls, 2001, p. 58). Rawls lists the primary goods in the following way (2001, pp. 44 (for liberties under (i) and 58 for the rest):

- (i) The basic rights and liberties: freedom of thought and liberty of conscience, political liberties and freedom of association, as well as the rights and liberties specified by the liberty and integrity of the person; and finally, the rights and liberties covered by the rule of law.
- (ii) Freedom of movement and free choice of occupation against a background of diverse opportunities, which opportunities allow the pursuit of a variety of ends and give effect to decisions to revise and alter them.
- (iii) Powers and prerogatives of offices and positions of authority and responsibility.
- (iv) Income and wealth, understood as all-purpose means generally needed to achieve a wide range of ends, whatever those may be.
- (v) The social bases of self-respect, understood as those aspects of basic institutions normally essential if citizens are to have a lively sense of their worth as persons and to be able to advance their ends with self-confidence.

³³ According to Dworkin (1981), "equality of resources is a matter of equality in whatever resources are owned privately by individuals," and the bundles of resources that are owned privately are determined through the theoretical device of an auction.

on numerous dimensions, including the subject of distribution (income, wealth, opportunities, rights, duties, power, self-respect, etc.), the beneficiaries of redistribution (individuals or groups), and on what basis distribution should be made (equality, equity, maximization, merit, etc.). The distinctive feature of distributive conceptions is the emphasis on distribution of the benefits and burdens of society. According to Young (1990), “what marks the distributive paradigm is a tendency to conceive of social justice and distribution as coextensive concepts” (p. 16).

Recognition

The recognition paradigm centered on the normative concept of recognition is much newer and is associated with “identity politics” and the “politics of difference” that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, arguably supplanting class politics and the corresponding emphasis on redistribution. The identity paradigm is comprised of wide ranging philosophical underpinnings and political activities that revolve around securing justice for particular social groups by demanding recognition of difference. The term “recognition” comes from Hegelian philosophy, specifically the phenomenology of consciousness (Hegel, 1807).³⁴ In this tradition, recognition is an ideal reciprocal relation that is necessary for subjectivity; one becomes an individual subject by virtue of being recognized by and recognizing another subject.

With the emergence of large scale political movements based on group membership, such as feminism, Black liberation, gay and lesbian liberation, and the

³⁴ See especially, “Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage” in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (pp. 111-119, Oxford University Press, 1979). See also Alexander Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (1969), and Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (1995).

Native American movement in the US and others across the globe, a new politics for the recognition of collective identity in various forms transpired in response to the view that distributive conceptions of justice and politics insufficiently deal with issues of group differentiation. Examples include claims for the recognition of the distinctive perspectives of ethnic, “racial,” gender, and sexual groups.

In response, claims for justice are being recast to highlight a politics of recognition, deemphasizing claims for redistribution. Contributing to this political shift in justice claims from redistribution to recognition is the fairly recent demise of communism, the surge of free-market ideology, and the rise of “identity politics” within social movements.

In this new constellation, the two kinds of justice claims are often dissociated from one another—both practically and intellectually. Within social movements such as feminism, for example, activist tendencies that look to redistribution as the remedy for male domination are increasingly dissociated from tendencies that look instead to recognition of gender difference. And the same is largely true in the intellectual sphere. In the academy, to continue with feminism, scholars who understand gender as a social relation maintain an uneasy arms-length coexistence with those who construe it as an identity or a cultural code. This situation exemplifies a broader phenomenon: the widespread decoupling of cultural politics from social politics, of the politics of difference from the politics of equality. (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, p. 8)

It seems, then, that we have two conceptions of social justice with a marked difference in their approach to the elimination of injustice. On one side is a deeply entrenched egalitarian conception stemming from the long-standing philosophical critique of the capitalist economy, which emphasizes maldistribution as the source of misrecognition. On this view, eliminating maldistribution also eliminates misrecognition (see, for example, Rawls, 1971, 1993, 2001 and Rorty, 2008). On the other side is a newer tradition of difference-conscious criticism, emphasizing the symbolic construction of hierarchy that results in misrecognition and drives maldistribution. On this view, eliminating misrecognition also eliminates maldistribution (see, for example, Honneth, 1995, 2003).³⁵

Integrating Distribution and Recognition: Justice as 'Participatory Parity'

Nancy Fraser convincingly argues that this antagonism between distributive and recognition approaches to justice is mistaken. Starting with her piece titled "From Redistribution to Recognition?" (1995), Fraser has developed an understanding of justice that combines insights from both camps. Claiming that injustice is two-dimensional, stemming from both the political economy and the status order, she argues that justice can only be realized by invoking both a politics of recognition and redistribution. As Fraser points out, "cultural differences can be freely elaborated and democratically mediated only on the basis of social equality" (1997, p. 186). Bridging recognition and distribution requires both the theoretical task of devising a conception

³⁵ "Honneth conceives recognition as the fundamental, overarching moral category, while treating distribution as derivative. Thus, he reinterprets the socialist ideal of redistribution as a subvariety of the struggle for recognition" (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, pp. 2-3).

of justice that can accommodate claims for equality and recognition of difference and the practical task of devising a politics that integrates the two.³⁶

This, however, can be tricky because philosophically the concepts of “recognition” and “redistribution” make an uneasy coupling due to the association of recognition with “ethics” (the good) and “morality” (the right) with redistribution. Norms of justice are thought to be universally binding regardless of commitments to specific conceptions of the good, while claims for recognition of difference cannot be universalized and depend on historically and culturally specific community values and require judgments of the relative worth of various cultural practices, traits, and identities.

It is not surprising, therefore, that many deontological theorists simply reject claims for the recognition of difference as violations of liberal neutrality, while concluding that distributive justice exhausts the whole of political morality. It is also unsurprising, conversely, that many theorists of recognition align themselves with ethics against morality; following the same reasoning as their liberal counterparts, they conclude that recognition requires qualitative value judgments that exceed the capacities of distributive models. (Fraser, 2001, p. 23)

³⁶ It is important to point out that Fraser is very clear that problems of misrecognition cannot be reduced to redistribution. She argues that standard theories of distributive justice cannot adequately subsume issues of recognition. “Not all misrecognition is a by-product of maldistribution, nor of maldistribution plus legal discrimination” (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, p. 34). At the same time, she does not think that existing theories of recognition can adequately subsume problems of distribution. Indeed, some theorists on both sides seek to accommodate the other, but do so, according to Fraser, inadequately.

A great deal of contemporary moral philosophy centers on disputes over the relative ranking of these two different normative categorizations.

Therefore, “there is no neat theoretical move by which [the redistribution-recognition dilemma] can be wholly dissolved or resolved. The best we can do is to try to soften the dilemma by finding approaches that minimize conflicts between redistribution and recognition in cases where both must be pursued simultaneously” (Fraser, 1995, in Olson, 2008, p. 39). Fraser argues convincingly that the best way to do this is to use a justice-theoretic *status* model of recognition that shifts from an “ethical” normative framework of justice where recognition is instrumental to self-realization to a deontological framework at the center of which is the democratic ideal of “participatory parity” in which recognition is instrumental to acquiring status as a full partner in social relations.

Status Model of Recognition

The key to joining recognition and distributive concerns is developing the correct understanding of recognition. As mentioned above, recognition is usually conceived of as an issue of the good life (ethics). This is the view of both Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth (the two most prominent contemporary theorists of recognition). To them, being recognized is a prerequisite for human flourishing; following Hegel, being recognized by another subject is a necessary condition for attaining subjectivity.

...nonrecognition or misrecognition...can be a form of oppression, imprisonment, someone in a false, distorted, reduced mode of being. Beyond simple lack of

respect, it can inflict a grievous wound, saddling people with crippling self-hatred.

Due recognition is not just a courtesy but a vital human need. (Taylor, 1994, p. 25)

Likewise, Honneth contends that “we owe our integrity...to the receipt of approval or recognition from other persons. [D]enial of recognition...is injurious because it impairs persons in their positive understanding of self—an understanding acquired by intersubjective means” (1992, pp. 188-189). Accordingly, both Taylor and Honneth take misrecognition to mean distorted subjectivity and harmed self-identity, and for both it is a matter of *ethics* concerned with impediments to self-realization, human flourishing, and the good life (an ethics-theoretic understanding of recognition—intersubjective self-realization is the first virtue³⁷). On this model, self-realization is prioritized over justice in that the good is rendered prior to the right.

Alternatively, a justice-theoretic understanding of recognition, with justice as the first virtue of recognition,³⁸ conceives recognition as a matter of justice within a deontological moral framework in which the right is separated from and rendered prior to the good. Accordingly, Fraser explains that

³⁷ “First” does not necessarily mean the highest virtue, but rather the virtue that secures the enabling conditions for all the others.

³⁸ The justice-theoretic conception of recognition does not exclude other meanings of recognition, but rather puts constraints on how they can be legitimately construed and pursued. Prioritizing justice (through the status model) rules out interpretations of recognition that inhibit institutionalized participatory parity. Therefore, there are legitimate forms of self-realization within Fraser’s conception. “Treating justice as the first virtue, it must seek to equalize the conditions under which various interpretations of human flourishing are formulated, debated, and pursued. Far from supplanting or demoting self-realization, then, the status model of recognition aims to establish the terrain on which it can be fairly pursued” (Fraser in Olson, 2008, p. 334).

it is unjust that some individuals and groups are denied the status of full partners in social interaction simply as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value in whose construction they have not equally participated and which disparage their distinctive characteristics or distinctive characteristics assigned to them. (2001, p. 26)

On this view, misrecognition is wrong because it is a form of institutionalized subordination and, thus, a violation of justice. Recognition, therefore, is a remedy for social injustice not merely the satisfaction of a human need. The form of recognition required in a particular case, either universal recognition of humanity or the recognition of distinctiveness, depends on the form of misrecognition and cannot be determined a priori, but rather approached in the vein of pragmatism informed by the insights of social theory. This approach helps overcome some limitations in that it rejects the claim that justice ought to be limited to public recognition of the qualities that all humans share. It also rejects the opposite claim that everyone is always justified in demanding the recognition of his or her distinctiveness (not all are morally justified).³⁹

This is a subtle distinction, but an important one because it allows recognition to become an analytically distinctive component of a theory of justice, along with distribution and with the normative core of participatory parity. This is a status model of recognition that does not appeal to a conception of the good life, but to a conception of

³⁹ To be sure, Charles Taylor, in *The Politics of Recognition* (1994), holds that we have a prima facie obligation to recognize others, but there may be limitations to this. However, limiting the obligation to recognize others is, for Taylor, based on ethical grounds, not justice. Therefore, the scope of persons due recognition might be larger for Fraser than for Taylor.

justice that can (and should) be accepted by those with varying conceptions of the good life. Therefore, it is consistent with value pluralism and is normatively binding on all. Additionally, it locates wrongs in social relations, avoiding psychologization: When misrecognition is thought of as a damaged identity, psychology is given importance over social institutions and interactions, putting a focus on changing individual psychology rather than social change. The risks are greater when the object of recognition is group identity. By putting moral pressure on individuals to conform to group culture, the complexities of people's lives and their multiple and possibly changing identities may be denied, and identities may be essentialized. This may also result in the reification of culture and may ignore struggles within social groups. It is important to recognize culture's political importance in that institutionalized patterns of cultural value can be a source of subordination, and the remedy for that is not to give recognition to devalued cultures or group identities, but to deinstitutionalize the patterns that lead to status inequality and impede participatory parity.

Fraser's status model of recognition attempts to accommodate the full complexity of social identities. From this perspective, what requires recognition is not group-specific identity, but rather the status of individual group members as full partners in social interactions of all sorts, including politics, the labor market, family, and so on. Misrecognition, therefore, is social subordination in the sense of social actors being prevented from participating as a peer in social life broadly conceived. In other words, "misrecognition is neither a psychic deformation nor a free-standing cultural harm but an institutionalized relation of social subordination" (Fraser, 2000, p.

113). To be misrecognized, then, is not simply to be looked down upon or diminished by others, but rather to be denied the status of full partner in social interactions as a consequence of *institutionalized* patterns of cultural value that deem certain individuals unworthy of respect. So, on the status model, misrecognition is a form of institutionalized subordination and, therefore, a violation of justice. For example, persistent issues of bullying of homosexuals and harassment of girls in schools is not simply a matter of increasing the esteem or respect of homosexuals and girls through “sensitivity” training, because such behaviors stem from deeply and institutionally entrenched cultural valuing of the masculine over the feminine. In this case, schools have a moral obligation to examine the institutionalized patterns of cultural value for their effects on the relative standing of students. When such patterns constitute some students as inferior, “other,” or invisible (e.g., less than full partners in social interactions), as the existence of bullying and harassment of particular populations of students does, then misrecognition as status subordination exists and must be remedied at the institutional level (as well as at the individual level),

‘Participatory Parity’

The remedy for injustice in its most general form is the removal of impediments to what Fraser calls *participatory parity*. Justice, accordingly, requires social arrangements that permit participatory parity. By *parity*, Fraser means:

the condition of being a peer, of being on par with others, of standing on equal footing. I leave the question open exactly as to what degree or level of equality is necessary to ensure such parity. In my formulation, moreover, the moral

requirement is that members of society be ensured the possibility of parity, if and when they choose to participate in a given activity or interaction. There is no requirement that everyone actually participate in any such activity. (2001, p. 40)

Participatory parity has two conditions that must be met: objective conditions (distribution concerns) and intersubjective conditions (recognition concerns). Both conditions are necessary, and neither alone is sufficient. The social arrangements must not institutionalize exploitation, deprivation, gross disparities in wealth, income, and leisure time, thereby denying some people the means and opportunities to interact with others as peers. The second condition requires that institutionalized patterns of cultural value express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social esteem, preventing institutionalized norms that systematically depreciate some categories of people and the qualities associated with them. The second condition does not obtain when, for example, institutionalized cultural valuations downgrade femininity, 'nonwhiteness,' homosexuality, and everything culturally associated with them as is the case with the persistent issues of homosexual bullying and harassment of girls in schools mentioned above. When that is the case, women and/or people of color and/or gays and lesbians, as well as anybody else, including straight white men, who choose to engage in activities or develop traits that are culturally coded as feminine, homosexual, or 'nonwhite,' face obstacles in participation that are not encountered by others.

Redressing misrecognition requires transforming social institutions, particularly replacing the interaction-regulating values that impede participatory parity with ones

that enable or promote it. “The status model is not committed *a priori* to any one type of remedy for misrecognition; rather, it allows for a range of possibilities, depending on what precisely the subordinated parties need in order to be able to participate as peers in social life” (Fraser, 2000, p. 115). For example, the case of marriage laws that exclude same sex partnerships as illegitimate and deviant is a case of misrecognition because interaction is regulated by an institutionalized pattern of cultural value that deems some social actors as normative and others as deficient or inferior (“straight” is normal, “queer” is inferior). The redressing of such injustice could take various forms: one option is to legalize same-sex marriage to grant the same recognition to gay lesbian unions as heterosexual unions; another option is to de-institutionalize marriage, removing the marital basis for healthcare, tax benefits, and entitlements for all. Either remedy would promote participatory parity in norm-regulated institutions. The most important point is that the status model of recognition seeks institutional remedies for institutionalized harms. This politics seeks to overcome status subordination by aligning the institutionalized values that regulate social interactions with those that provide participatory parity.

Participatory parity is also impeded when some actors lack the required resources and opportunities for equal participation. In such instances, maldistribution is the form of social subordination and injustice, requiring a different kind of remedy. Thus, the status model allows for social justice to be understood as encompassing two analytically distinct dimensions: “a dimension of recognition, which concerns the effects of institutionalized meanings and norms on the relative standing of social actors; and a

dimension of distribution, which involves the allocation of disposable resources to social actors” (Fraser, 2000, p. 116).⁴⁰

When dealing with social collectivities that present fairly straightforward justice claims of either recognition or redistribution, the remedy is clear.⁴¹ For example, class is a means of social differentiation entrenched in the political economic structure of society. A class only exists as a social collectivity in virtue of its position in that structure and of its relation to other classes. The injustice of these relations is quintessentially a matter of distribution. Overcoming class exploitation requires restructuring the political economy to eliminate the class-based group differentiation. In Fraser’s words, “the logic of the remedy is to put the group out of business as a group” (Fraser in Olson, 2008, p. 22).

On the other end of the political spectrum, a social collectivity that is wholly fixed in culture, as opposed to political economy, fits the recognition model of justice. Such a collectivity only exists because of the dominant cultural-valuational structure of society. The source of the injustice is cultural misrecognition, and any economic injustices result ultimately from that cultural devaluation. The remedy, therefore, is cultural recognition.

⁴⁰ In this piece, Fraser writes in a footnote that she should say “*at least* two analytically distinct dimensions” to permit the possibility of more. She has in mind here a possible third class of obstacles that she calls the *political*. This is distinguished from the economic (maldistribution) and cultural (misrecognition) in that it captures obstacles that include decision-making procedures that subordinate some even without maldistribution and misrecognition. She develops this category more fully in later work (see especially 2005).

⁴¹ It could be argued pure collectivities do not exist, but it is useful for analytical purposes to assume such collectivities as approximations of ideal types.

Sexuality provides an exemplary mode of social differentiation based in the cultural-valuational structure of society. Homosexuals are distributed among the entire class structure and occupy no distinctive position in the division of labor, but as a collectivity they comprise the devalued sexuality. Homosexuals suffer from heterosexism, the institutionalized construction of norms that privilege heterosexuality. As such they are subject to shaming, harassment, discrimination, and violence, while being denied legal rights and equal protections—all in essence denials of recognition. The remedy for such injustice is recognition, not redistribution⁴². This means transforming cultural valuations (including their legal and practical expressions) that privilege heterosexuality, deny equal respect, and refuse to legitimate non-heterosexual partnerships.

Gender provides an interesting case for analyzing the interconnectivity of recognition and distribution and the need to integrate the two in a single normative conception of justice. Gender is a “bivalent” collectivity in that differentiation exists because of *both* the political-economic structure *and* the cultural-valuation structure of society (Fraser, 1997, 2000, 2005; Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Fraser & Naples, 2004). Bivalent collectivities may suffer both political-economic maldistribution and cultural misrecognition in forms where neither of these injustices is a simple and straightforward effect such that eliminating one automatically eliminates the other. In this sense, both are fundamental. As such, bivalent collectivities need both redistributive and

⁴² Undeniably, homosexuals suffer serious economic injustices. They are denied family-based social welfare benefits and can be unjustly dismissed from work. However, these injustices are not rooted in the political economy, but rather are economic consequences of the cultural-valuational structure of society.

recognition remedies. Gender structures both the division of unpaid and paid labor, as well as the division within paid labor. At the same time, gender is a cultural-valuational differentiation in that social norms privilege traits associated with masculinity (androcentrism) and devalue those associated with femininity (cultural sexism). This bivalent nature of gender seems to create a theoretical and practical quandary. Fraser explains, “Whereas the logic of redistribution is to put gender out of business as such, the logic of recognition is to valorize gender specificity” (Fraser in Olson, 2008, p. 25). This is the feminist version of the recognition/redistribution dilemma: how can we fight to eliminate gender differentiation and have appreciation for gender specificity at the same time?

Remedies for Injustice

Fraser addresses this dilemma by considering remedies that complicate the assumptions that redistributive remedies for political-economic injustice always diminish or eliminate social group differentiation and that recognition remedies for cultural-valuational injustice always deepen social group differentiation. She distinguishes two broad approaches that bridge the redistribution-recognition divide: “affirmation” and “transformation” (Fraser in Olson, 2008). Fraser provides a summary matrix that permits us to analyze the compatibility of various remedies (see Table 1).

Table 1: Fraser’s Injustice Remedies Matrix

	Affirmation	Transformation
Redistribution	<u>the liberal welfare state</u> surface reallocations of existing goods to existing groups; supports group differentiation; can generate misrecognition	<u>socialism</u> deep restructuring of relations of productions; blurs group differentiation; can help remedy some forms of misrecognition

Recognition	<u>mainstream multiculturalism</u> surface reallocations of respect to existing identities of existing groups; supports group differentiation	<u>deconstruction</u> deep restructuring of relations of recognition; destabilizes group differentiation
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(Fraser in Olson, 2008, p. 34)

Within the matrix are the two general kinds of remedies (affirmation and transformation), the two aspects of justice (redistribution and recognition), and four political orientations (liberal welfare state, socialism, multiculturalism, and deconstruction). The distinction between affirmation and transformation is in “end-state outcomes versus the processes that produce them” (Fraser in Olson, 2008, p. 28).

Affirmative remedies.

Affirmative remedies for injustice are those “aimed at correcting inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying framework that generates them” (2008, p. 28). Affirmative remedies for economic injustice are associated with liberal welfare state and seek to remedy maldistribution, leaving intact the underlying political-economic structure. Alternately, in terms of misrecognition, affirmative strategies are associated with mainstream multiculturalism and aim to redress disrespect by revaluing group identities without diminishing group specificity or challenging the identities. Mainstream multiculturalism within schools has by and large emphasized transforming curriculum and pedagogy in ways that confer positive recognition to all students (Bingham, 2006, p. 325).

Affirmative perspectives predominate in the literature about gender and schooling, as well as in past and present practice and policy. The history discussed in Chapter Two shows stark examples of the distribution/recognition dilemma and the

remedies on both counts invoke affirmative politics that emphasize surface reallocations of opportunities and respect by supporting group differentiation, but do little to transform structures that are the root cause of injustice.

The liberal feminist agenda of the 1960s and 1970s aimed at legal changes to remove barriers and establish the same educational opportunities for girls as boys is a classic example of the distributive conception of justice, employing affirmative remedies, and is politically consistent with the project of the liberal welfare state. The emphasis was on reallocating resources to make equal opportunities for girls by addressing gendered course-taking patterns, differential course and career counseling, sports and extracurricular programs for girls, academic support for girls in math and science, and the gendered division of labor within schools.

In the 1980s, the difference feminists began to invoke a politics of recognition because, in their view, the distributive politics of removing barriers to increase and equalize opportunities did little to address the negative cultural valuation of girls and women. Remedies for misrecognition were to make girls and women more visible and valued by tackling textbook and other curricular bias and making pedagogy more “girl friendly” by emphasizing cooperation and caring. In the 1990s, the work of the AAUW echoed the earlier liberal feminist calls for a politics of redistribution, while Sadker and Sadker continued to tackle misrecognition through affirmative strategies by raising issues about how much attention girls receive from teachers in relation to boys, claiming small differences can affect self-esteem, the way boys view girls in terms of status, and gendered messages about behavior expectations.

Within the current boy turn, the meliorative scholarship also emphasizes affirmative strategies to address achievement differences between boys and girls, invoking a politics of redistribution for the most part. The meliorative scholarship echoes earlier efforts with girls by suggesting redistribution of course-taking patterns and providing academic support in literacy.

Affirmative politics to remedy both maldistribution and misrecognition do not challenge the underlying social, political, and economic structures that create the injustice.

Leaving intact the deep structures that generate gender disadvantage, it must make surface reallocations again and again. The result is not only to underline gender differentiation. It is also to mark women as deficient and insatiable, as always needing more and more. In time, women can even come to appear privileged, recipients of special treatment and undeserved largesse. Thus, an approach aimed at redressing injustices of distribution can end up fueling backlash injustices of misrecognition. (Fraser in Olson, 2008, p. 16)

This pattern is readily apparent in the current situation with boys and schooling and backlash politics found in the popular-rhetorical literature I discuss in Chapter Three. After decades of redistribution efforts to help girls, some argue that it is time for boys to “have a turn.” The argument offered by the popular-rhetorical literature is that schools have focused so much attention on girls and “feminizing” schools that they cannot meet the needs of boys. This view assumes a naïve conception of gender equality that is inconsistent with the understanding that the relational structures of gender powerfully

affect individual boys *and* girls and institutions. It is not helpful for promoting justice in schools and, as such, should be seriously questioned.

Transformative remedies.

Transformative remedies are those that seek to restructure underlying frameworks in order to correct inequitable outcomes of social arrangements. Transformative strategies for recognition confront disrespect through deconstruction that aims to transform the underlying cultural-valuational structure by challenging existing group identities and differentiation. Alternately, transformative strategies for economic injustice are associated with socialism and seek to redress maldistribution by transforming the political-economic structure through restructuring the social division of labor. Using gender as a case in point, transformative redistribution to redress gender injustice in the political economy consists in some form of socialist feminism or feminist social democracy, while transformative recognition to redress gender injustice in the culture consists in feminist deconstruction aimed at eliminating androcentrism and cultural sexism through the undermining of gender dichotomies. The eventual objective of deconstructive feminism is a deep restructuring of gender relations to remove group differentiation based on hierarchical gender dichotomies so as to destabilize all fixed gender identities such that gender would be accepted as multiple and fluid. This goal is consistent with transformative socialist redistribution in that deconstruction opposes the sort of rigidly binary and fixed conception of gender differences that occurs in an unjustly structured political economy.

A transformative approach that combines redistribution and recognition (as conceived through the status model and as a politics of deconstruction) is the best means to promoting justice vis a vis gender in schools. The transformational literature that I explore in Chapter Three is consistent with the transformative strategies discussed in this chapter. For example, the body of work comprising the transformational scholarship emphasizes that gender is both a cultural and material phenomenon that affects how we define “men” and “women” and what this classification means in terms of social positioning. In other words, gender is “bivalent,” requiring considerations of both distribution and recognition. Recognizing this, the transformational literature presupposes remedies that require a restructuring of gender relations, which necessitates both transformative redistribution and recognition.

As I discuss in Chapter Three, there are three intersecting structures of gender relations that need to be transformed to realize just gender regimes in the school setting and the larger gender order. The structure of labor creates a distinct (but not absolute) division of labor in schools that affects the work specializations among teachers and informal specializations among students in terms of gendered course selections and classroom roles. Related to this, the structure of power creates a hierarchy of gender patterns seen in schools as the association of masculinity with authority and concentrations of men in supervisory positions. The structure of cathexis creates an ideology about sexual behavior and character seen in schools through explicit heteronormativity and homophobia. Transforming these structures requires challenging masculinities and overcoming sexism, homophobia, and heteronormativity through

deep restructuring of relations of production and deconstruction of gender dichotomies, which sits squarely within a transformative approach to both redistribution and recognition.

The work of the difference feminists of the 1980s discussed in Chapter Two, Carol Gilligan, Nel Noddings, and Jane Roland Martin, represent inchoate transformational scholarship in that they challenged the underlying values driving educational policy, practice, goals, and structures by unmasking the cultural valuation of the masculine over the feminine in educational institutions and practices. By redefining and expanding education to include caring relations, the difference feminists were blurring the lines of traditional gender divisions and providing early, but limited, theoretical guidance for restructuring gender relations that was silent on redistribution. The small body of transformational practice-oriented work discussed in Chapter Three provides practical social and psychological strategies for combating sexism, engaging students in critical examinations of gender, and dealing with bullying and harassment in school settings (Brown & Fletcher, 1995; Davies, et al, 1994; Denborough, 1996; Jackson & Salisbury, 1996; Katz, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2006; Katz & Jhally, 1999, Mills, 2001). This work particularly focuses on transformational strategies around recognition through deconstruction practices.

Megan Boler's non-gender-specific work on multicultural education (1999) provides some very helpful insights to help maintain the transformational potential of recognition strategies in educational settings. Boler cautions that because many versions of multicultural education (including those addressing gender) intend to

encourage recognition (on a personal level) of nondominant, oppressed groups, particularly by students in socially dominant positions, care must be taken to encourage critique of the broader political forces that support misrecognition. Otherwise, dominant students may become complacent after they have learned about “others.” Boler suggests the notion of a “pedagogy of discomfort,” which has a political action component. “As we hear about and witness horrors, what calls for recognition is not ‘me’ and the possibility of my misfortune, but a recognition of power relations that defines the interaction between reader and text and the conflicts represented within text” (Boler, 1999, pp. 164-165). Recognition strategies in schools, then, should encourage understanding and change through critical examinations of power relations.

As discussed, transformational strategies for both recognition and redistribution are preferable because they get to the root of injustice and aim to make real structural changes.

Transformative Trajectories

While transformative approaches are preferable, they are very difficult in practice and prone to collective action problems because they are detached from the everyday concerns of most people. Those suffering from misrecognition are likely to prefer more immediate efforts for affirmation of a depreciated identity over the distant and difficult elimination of status distinctions based on hierarchical cultural valuations. Likewise, those affected by maldistribution gain more immediate benefit from redistribution within existing structures, making calls for economic transformation through democratic social planning impracticable. Actual transformative strategies

“become feasible only under unusual circumstances, when events conspire to wean people simultaneously from current constructions of their interests and identities” (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, pp. 77-78). Therefore, if transformative strategies are preferable in principle, but more difficult to achieve in practice, then some intermediate strategies between the affirmative and transformative poles must be considered to move us toward transformation.

There is the “possibility of a via media between an affirmative strategy that is politically feasible but substantively flawed and a transformative one that is programmatically sound but politically impracticable. What defines this alternative strategy is its reliance on ‘nonreformist reforms’” (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, p. 79). These would be policies that can do two things simultaneously. They can both fulfill people’s immediate needs and set in motion a trajectory of change in which more radical reforms become practicable over time. This is possible because the distinction between affirmation and transformation is contextual in that reforms that appear to be affirmative in the abstract can have transformative effects in some contexts, provided they are radically and consistently pursued.

In the case of education, the state of Maine’s *Task Force on Gender Equity in Education* (2007)⁴³ provides a good example of intermediate approaches that address both recognition and redistribution, calling for mostly affirmative strategies that may

⁴³ It should be noted that the state of Maine’s response to the ‘boy crisis’ is the only of its kind in the US. While it only provides characteristics of and strategies for gender equitable schools, it shows the progressive potential of transformational gender work on thinking about how schools ought to educate students both academically and socially. Much more needs to be done in the state to create local policies and implementation must be persistently pursued and monitored.

lead to transformational effects in the long run if implemented carefully. Initially established to address Maine educator's concerns about the academic performance of boys, the task force discovered that it is also necessary to address girls (e.g., drawing from the relational understanding of gender), as well as issues of race and class. In the course of their work, they wound up with a list of general characteristics for gender equitable schools and suggestions for creating such schools that begin with the premise that gender, socioeconomic status, and/or race and ethnicity should not hinder nor provide greater educational opportunities for some at the expense of other (2007, p. 44 & pp. 47-53).

According to the Task Force, there needs to be an emphasis on increasing both boys' and girls' academic motivation and achievement, especially in areas where they are underrepresented or underperforming. They suggest encouraging boys' participation in language arts and making certain "their interests are represented in curriculum materials," while continuing to promote girls' enrollment in advanced math, science, and technology courses, highlighting future career possibilities and success for girls in these fields. Additionally, educators need to vary their pedagogical strategies, emphasizing active rather than passive methods, integrating reading and writing across the curriculum, giving students opportunities to exercise choice and control in their learning, creating opportunities for critical problem solving, and building on students' prior learning and experiences. Furthermore, schools should promote participation in activities other than sports. "Recognition of academic achievement and participation in academically oriented extra-curricular activities should occur in the community served

by a school; in particular, the participation of boys in such activities should generate at least the same amount of pride for students and their schools as their performance on the athletic field” (Maine Task Force, 2007, p. 48). Finally, schools should provide peer role models of the same gender for students who are struggling, and the make-up of the school staff and administration should be gender diverse.

Gender equitable schools, as indicated by the Maine Task Force, should provide a safe and respectful climate for all students. Gender, socioeconomic status, and/or race and ethnicity should not affect the treatment of students by peers and/or staff. One practical strategy suggested is the use of “Hardiness Zones” (based on the work of Debold, Brown, Weesen, & Brookins, 1999), which are safe zones, where students can feel comfortable testing new ideas and can practice taking action and making changes. They suggest that this helps students to “identify, name, oppose, and replace harmful messages about femininity and masculinity” (2007, p. 48). Additionally, they assert that schools should carefully monitor the school environment and address overt and subtle forms of harassment.

Another aspect of the Task Force’s gender equitable schools is that they “discourage” stereotyping based on traditional constructs of masculinity and femininity among staff and students. One way to achieve this, according to the Task Force, is to educate students about gender, especially on the social construction of masculinities and femininities. Accordingly, this education should include opportunities for students and community members to engage in on-going, critical discussions about gender issues at all levels of schooling and in various group configurations, with special emphasis on

the middle school years and providing opportunities to explore masculinities and femininities in same-sex groups. They also suggest that schools include strategies to address the social, physical, and emotional issues of gender, such as eating disorders among girls and bullying among boys. Additionally, families and communities should be engaged with recognizing and dealing with the social, physical, and emotional aspects of gender, while teachers should structure assignments and lessons to critically address issues of gender on an on-going basis across the curriculum. Furthermore, schools and communities should support both boys and girls in identifying and opposing narrow expressions of gender and help them in accepting multiple ways to develop gender identities.

In order to achieve the gender equitable schools as described above, the Task Force recognizes the need for educators to be “knowledgeable about gender issues and strategies for creating gender equitable classrooms and school environments, and are supported in implementing these strategies” (p. 44). Specifically, the Task Force recommends “learning circles” in schools and/or districts in which educators read common books and articles and then meet to discuss these readings and how to apply the concepts to their teaching, relationships with students, and the school environment. Also, they suggest that schools should offer professional development and on-going follow-up on gender issues, including intersections with race and class. Finally, they recommend that the state promote collaboration of higher education with elementary and secondary institutions in addressing the academic performance of low-achieving students.

The Maine task force also acknowledged that achieving gender equity is challenging, and they identified three key barriers to doing so—lack of awareness about gender issues among educators, students, and the American public writ large; issues of structural privilege in our schools and society; and disparate distribution of social capital. In their recommendations, they address the issue of lack of awareness about gender. They recognize the larger social structures of privilege and oppression (which is related to the disparate distribution of social capital) as impacting schools and the potential of their suggested reforms. However, they don't let that paralyze their work. They seem to think that by making changes in the schools and engaging with communities and families on these issues that social transformation may follow. In other words, they see schools as good sites for via media approaches.

Heavily influenced by the transformational literature discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation, the Maine Task Force recognized the complexity of gender as relational and socially constructed, as well intersecting with other socially significant factors, such as race and class. According to their document, "boys and girls are more alike than different, and where differences exist they might be complicated by factors other than gender. Practices that take this approach, that avoid generalizations and stereotypical expectations, are more likely to truly match the needs of the individual student" (2007, p. 23). As I indicated earlier, the theoretical insights and practices emanating from the transformational literature are the most compatible with the critical conception of justice I developed earlier in this chapter. As such, the practices recommended by the Maine Task Force are likely to support the objective and

intersubjective conditions of participatory parity if fleshed out and implemented carefully.

Conclusion

Fraser's approach described in this chapter augments the transformational scholarship examined in Chapter Three by articulating a theory of justice that provides conceptual means for answering what she correctly identifies as the foremost political question of our day: "How can we develop a coherent programmatic perspective that integrates redistribution and recognition" (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, p.86)? Such conceptual tools help us avoid or move beyond some of the affirmative remedies suggested through the meliorative scholarship that provide only surface reallocations, leaving intact the deeper structures of injustice. It also helps us identify promising via media approaches that lead the way for future transformative policies and practices within education. Such an approach provides hope for both boys and girls by tackling unjust gender regimes in schools and later in life through potentially changing the gender order.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In recent years, a growing concern for boys and their education has emerged in most Western countries, making headlines in mainstream US media with little oppositional response from high profile voices and US educational researchers. If media headlines and parental and educator concerns are right, we are in the midst of a “boy crisis.” My placement of quotation marks around “boy crisis” not only reflects my skepticism of the notion, but also highlights the concept as a generalization within which many complexities are subsumed. Throughout my analyses herein, I have endeavored to unravel some of these complexities and identify a possible way forward that promotes justice.

The most vocal and visible responses come from the media and popular books that proffer the view that *all* boys are in trouble, relying on extremely essentialized notions of gender to argue that schools are failing to meet their needs as a result of several decades of feminist interventions that have made it so that schools only meet the needs of girls. At the same time as the popular-rhetorical sources have been central in the construction and take up of the “boy crisis,” this literature has also played a significant role in promulgating the idea that the feminist project has been completed. Such views construct boys as the new disadvantaged in the level playing field of the “post-feminist” era with natural, binary accounts of gender. The current concerns about

boys, as expressed in the popular-rhetorical literature, draws on two simple themes: that girls have achieved equality and it is now boys who are losing out in schools as evidenced by changing patterns in standardized test scores; and that girls' and boys' issues are a mirror image, so what is needed is to take over strategies that have been successful with girls and apply these to boys.

Projects of gender equity in schooling, historically equated with girls, though by no means uniform in their politics or their framing assumptions, have broadly been concerned with inequalities of educational opportunities and also with addressing the school's role in the formation of gender identity (student self-perceptions, ambitions, skills, and social relations). Affirmative strategies, particularly those grounded in redistribution have been the predominant approach to gender equity in schooling for girls. The emphasis has been on reallocating resources to make equal opportunities for girls by addressing things such as gendered course-taking patterns, differential course and career counseling, and academic support in subjects, such as math and science, where girls tend not to perform as well or participate as much as boys. Affirmative approaches grounded in recognition included the development of "girl-friendly" pedagogies and changing curricular materials to remove bias and reflect the interests of girls. These affirmative strategies are the same as those suggested for boys.

There has been a scholarly response in the US, which I refer to as "meliorative," that attempts to temper the popular representations by teasing out actual test score trends through statistical analyses of achievement and other data. This literature shows that not all boys are in trouble and that some girls are still struggling. Nonetheless, the

emphasis is still on compensatory school- and classroom-based strategies for raising the academic achievement of boys in the vein of previous work with girls.

The popular and meliorative responses to boys' education fail to consider the actual social and economic significance of differential achievement as measured by standardized tests scores, which are the focus of so much attention. Using test scores as the chief measure of equity gives undue emphasis to a small group of girls at the top and reframes the agenda for schooling away from actual and persistent forms of inequity for girls and some boys, such as sexual harassment, sexism, and homophobia. Both categories of research also ignore issues of power and the recognition of masculinities and femininities as relational phenomena, resulting in both the popular and meliorative literature to overlook how gender contributes to some patterns of failure for boys and to the restrictions in pay off for high "achieving" girls. Boys' and girls' issues are intertwined and intersect with a number of other factors, and these complexities are rarely represented in the popular-rhetorical literature and only superficially in the meliorative literature.

The complexities that arise as developing children, who are gendered, raced, and classed, interact individually and among peers with a powerful institution that is also gendered, raced, and classed are addressed by what I call the "transformational" response to the boy turn in educational research and practice. The major contributions of this body of work are re-emphasizing a relational understanding of gender that theorizes gender as a set of structural social positions that was developed by earlier feminists and extending this theory to consider masculinities as an important aspect of

gender and how this impacts boys in the school setting. The more nuanced understanding of gender proffered by the transformational literature has important implications for how we understand the issues affecting boys and schooling. It keeps our attention on the importance of gender in schooling by showing that the subject positions of masculinities that are influenced by race and class and created and maintained within schools and social relations and practices, texts, institutional structures, and larger political and economic process explain to a great extent the patterns we're seeing in male achievement in schooling. It also helps us to see that we need to use different strategies to address the problems, since boys' issues are not simply a mirror image of girls' issues because of power relations that still favor the masculine over the feminine, keeping patriarchy alive and continuing to cause problems for girls in school and the larger society. The transformational literature draws our attention to how large and complicated the issue really is and urges us to think about solutions much more broadly.

While I find the transformational literature to be the most helpful in understanding this moment in the history of education and gender, I found a gap in the way that the literature as a whole addressed the issue of justice. Often appealing to the idea of justice, the transformational literature does not adequately theorize the concept. It is this gap that I try to fill by bringing contemporary political philosophy into a conversation dominated by sociology. The question of justice—its meaning and requirements—has been a central concern of political philosophy since Plato's *Republic*,

making political philosophy particularly helpful for clarifying principles of justice and articulating a politics to guide educational policy and practice.

In recent years, the tension between distributive and recognitive conceptions of justice has figured prominently in political philosophy. Distributive conceptions emphasize equalizing the distribution of social benefits (income, wealth, opportunities, rights, duties, etc.), while recognitive theories highlight overcoming the stigmatization of depreciated cultures, identities, ways of life, and social contributions. I particularly appeal to Nancy Fraser (1997; 2000; 2005; Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Fraser & Naples, 2004) because she has provided a significant contribution by theorizing justice so that both concerns are addressed simultaneously. In doing so, she identifies two general strategies for remedying injustice, affirmation and transformation, that bridge the distribution-recognition divide. The difference between affirmative and transformative approaches is in the ends rather than the means. Affirmative strategies for redistribution and recognition result in unchanged social structures, while transformational approaches require institutional restructuring.

Transformational approaches are the most theoretically defensible, but are not nearly as influential as affirmative approaches in the current policy and practice scene. However, they are not totally absent, rough forms can be seen, and they amount to “non-reformist reforms,” such as those developed by the Maine Task Force for Gender Equity. These, when informed by the social and gender theory of the transformational literature and other critical and feminist scholars, provide the best hope for promoting social change in the long run.

The “boy turn” in education is not reducible to a simple question of what to do about the boys. Both boys and girls are affected by gender regimes and their success or failure to measure up to gendered expectations as promoted and valued by the schools, their peers, or the media. Broadening the questions has considerable significance in terms of reform strategy and of policy in relation to public schooling. A strategy with the aim of providing surface reallocations of existing educational resources and respect to existing identities is very different than one whose aim is to challenge more broadly what is currently valued and rewarded in the educational institutions and the broader society. This affects both the public policy level of gender reform and also micro-level strategies of gender projects. A politics and reform strategy that fails to address how broader social and structural inequalities and systemic forces intersect with gender for specific groups of boys and girls will fail to foster students’ capacity to participate and engage fully in schooling, reinforcing conditions of injustice.

The conclusion of this dissertation argues for a transformational gender agenda, grounded in justice, for schooling to benefit both boys and girls in their academic, social, and political development. It is a conclusion that does not give “the answer” so much as it continues and contributes to an already rich discussion of theory, politics, and educational policy and practice.

Research and theory can only inform policy and practice, not provide a blueprint of what to do. The theory of justice that I articulate in Chapter Four is most useful for enriching transformational scholarship by focusing attention more directly on what justice demands and creating boundaries for public deliberations. Accordingly, the key

question in democratic deliberations ought to be whether the policies or practices in question foster or have the potential to foster participatory parity, which requires taking into account both the distributive and recognitive dimensions of justice simultaneously. Framing deliberations in this way provides practical insight into possible problems within political struggles for redistribution and recognition by requiring considerations of claims from both normative perspectives. So, it helps us anticipate, and hopefully avoid, the detrimental effects of faulty political strategies. That said, more research and theorizing are required.

Possibilities for Further Research

The current emphasis on boys and schooling makes it clear that there continues to be a need for both empirical and theoretical engagements with issues of gender and education. There are a number of areas that are in urgent need of continued research and analysis. One such topic is persistent bullying and harassment, especially in light of the recent rise in bullying and school violence targeted predominantly at homosexual male students and heavily covered in the media. Another concern to be investigated is the clear under-performance of low-income students and racial minorities of both genders. The presumptive equality of postfeminism and the resulting attention to boys disguises genuine issues for marginalized groups of boys *and* girls of low-socioeconomic status, different and sexual identities, and/or gender expressions.

The Maine Equity Gender Task Force, discussed in Chapter Four, the only well-defined initiative specifically aimed at boys in the US, is a hopeful intermediary reform strategy that has attempted to address all of the complex gender issues that arise in the

context of schooling addressed above. It is primarily affirmative but may have transformative effects in the long run. The Maine Gender Equity Task Force drew a great deal from what I refer to as “transformational” scholarship in Chapter Three, especially regarding its use of a social constructionist and relational understanding of gender that led the Task Force to focus on boys and girls and the development of characteristics of and strategies for creating gender equitable schools.⁴⁴ As I suggest in Chapter Four, further research is needed around the implementation of the Task Force’s suggestions for policy and practice.

Another prominent issue regarding boys and schooling in the US is the schooling and social problems of African American males. The body of work that I refer to as the *meliorative* scholarship in Chapter Three, has teased out the statistics on boys and schooling by asking the question, “Which boys?” and found that there are real issues for poor and minority boys, especially African American boys. There is a growing body of scholarship specifically addressing African American males, especially in the context of urban public schools, due to increased concerns around African American male achievement and concomitant high rates of special education placements, behavioral problems, disciplinary action, dropouts, incarcerations, and other social difficulties (Coley, 2001; Davis, 2003; Fashola, 2005; Ferguson, 2000; Gewertz, 2007; Hubbard & Datnow, 2005; McCready, 2004, 2010; Murtadah-Watts, 2000; Noguera, 1997, 2003, 2008; Ogbu, 2003; Polite & Davis, 1999).

⁴⁴ The Maine Gender Equity Task Force (2007) explicitly references scholars that I place in the transformational approach, such as Victoria Foster, Michael Kimmel, Wayne Martino, and Christine Skelton.

Two recent reports, *Yes We Can: Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males* (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010) and *A Call for Change: The Social and Educational Factors Contributing to the Outcomes of Black Males in Urban Schools* (Lewis et al., 2010), provide extensive evidence of an educational “crisis” in the United States for African American boys. These reports show stark differences in educational outcomes of White male and African American male students, as well as between African American female and male students. For example, out of the 48 states participating in the Schott report, Black males are the least likely to graduate from high school in 33 states (2010, p. 37). Furthermore, Lewis et al. analyzed NAEP data on reading and math achievement in fourth and eighth grades as well as school readiness factors and college and career preparedness and found that “Black males continue to perform lower than their peers throughout the country on almost every indicator” (2010, p. 2).

[I]n the majority of U.S. states, districts, communities, and schools, the conditions necessary for Black males to systemically succeed in education do not exist. Unfortunately, today's data indicate that a Black male student who manages to achieve high school graduation speaks more for that individual's ability than for benefits he may have received from the system. In fact, the data indicates that most systems contribute to the conditions in which Black males have nearly as great a chance of being incarcerated as graduating. (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010, p. 4)

Districts, states, and schools across the US have recognized the crisis for African

American boys that the above data suggest for quite some time now, prompting a smattering of programs and policy statements. In 2005, school officials in Teaneck, NJ, created an after-school club to link Black boys with local Black businessmen. The South Euclid-Lyndhurst school district in Cleveland, Ohio invested \$20,000 to create clubs to reward Black boys for achieving good grades (Hu, 2007). In New York and other large cities, all-male schools for Black students⁴⁵⁴⁶ have been created. Also in New York, the Ossining Union Free School District has implemented programs that separate Black boys from the rest of the school, providing Black teacher mentors for one-to-one guidance and tutoring, special cultural events, a special curriculum, and extra homework help (Hu, 2007).

In 1993, a Governor's commission on Black males in Maryland asserted that there is a great deal of evidence to demonstrate that all children are not valued equally, that some children are clearly valued more than other children, and finally, that African-American male children are valued least of all. It is not likely that

⁴⁵ In Detroit, Michigan, in the early 1990s, three all-male schools for African American boys were created. These were contested in the courts on the grounds of violating Title IX. In 1991, a district court ruled that the schools did, indeed, violate Title IX and equal educational opportunities for girls (*Garrett v. Board of Education of the School District of Detroit*). Since then, changes to Title IX were made in 2006 to allow for single sex programs for boys to complement NCLB's "innovative programs" section. The weakening of Title IX and including the use of single-sex arrangements under NCLB mean that newer programs created to support African American boys will not likely be challenged in the courts, and we may see more of these programs spring up.

⁴⁶ Single-sex education is another area of research that needs further attention and could take a number of angles. Researchers may be interested in its link to school choice and if the gender equity component would be diminished because of that. Additionally, there may be questions about why "separate but equal" was so thoroughly denounced on the basis of race, but not gender, which gets especially complicated with regards to separating African American males.

schools, as they are currently structured, will ever look on the majority of children they serve as having unlimited potential. (Maryland State Department of Education, 2006)

The commission urged the schools in the state to address the educational needs of Black boys. A decade later, the state of Maryland released a report based on the work of another task force, the Task Force on the Education of Maryland's African American Males, echoing the suggestions found in the report from the Governor's commission. These suggestions included recruiting African American male teachers, teacher training in "cultural competency," scrutinizing what seems like an over-identification of Black males in special education, providing additional college preparatory support, increasing African American male enrollment in AP courses, providing single sex classes for Black males in predominantly Black schools, providing more supervised suspension and behavioral modification programs, offering mentors, and increasing family and community support. In the end, they urged for the development of the actual policy and programs to be implemented so that African American boys in the state could be better served. According to the Maryland Task Force (2006), the suggestions that they offer

need policies attached to make them actionable and accountability to make them enforceable. They need the backing of the political leadership and a clear, unequivocal promise from each state agency as to how it will help fix this problem of inequity and inadequacy. These recommendations need an independent group to monitor our progress and to hold our feet to the fire if we fail to make it. (p. vii)

The large, urban city of Oakland, California has been dealing with the same problems outlined above, and in the fall of 2010, the Superintendent of Oakland's public schools created a privately funded⁴⁷ Cabinet-level office, African American Male Achievement, to improve the education of black male students and, ultimately, their lives. In California (like the rest of the US), racial disparities in educational outcomes between Black male and White male students are quite striking. The graduation rate for Black male students is 54% compared to 78% for White male students. In terms of fourth grade reading as measured by NAEP, 67% of California's Black males read below the basic level compared to 41% of White male students (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010). Similar disparities are seen in NAEP eighth grade reading scores with 55% of Black male and 31% of White male students scoring below basic level (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010). There are also substantial differences in math achievement as measured by NAEP. In fourth grade, 43% of Black males and 23% of White males are below basic level, while in eighth grade 56% of Black males and 29% of White males are below basic level (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010). Likewise, there are notable disparities between Black and White male students in terms of rates of discipline, special education classification, and advanced placement enrollment (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010).

The establishment of OUSD's new office is Part of Superintendent Tony Smith's 2010-2015 Strategic Vision for the district. According to Smith, the overarching goal of the office of African American Male Achievement is "to interrupt the institutional

⁴⁷ The office is currently funded by two local organizations, the East Bay Community Foundation and Urban Strategies.

oppression and racism that is in effect in the city of Oakland” (Murphy, 2010). In order to do this and believing that the schools can have an impact in changing society, OUSD has hired a director for the office to lead a four year effort to cut in half the African American male incarceration rate in Oakland, increase their average attendance by 75 percent, double their high school graduation rate, eliminate the racial disparity in suspensions, and close the fourth grade literacy gap (Murphy, 2010).

These policy efforts and programs provide an opportunity for further research, particularly empirical work on policy development and implementation, and is potentially transformative, especially in light of the commitment to interrupting oppression and racism, so long as it is informed by a nuanced understanding of the racial and class intersections with gender and the issues of masculinities. Without careful implementation and consideration of the complexities of gender and education highlighted in this dissertation, reification of gender is a possible pitfall, especially if the emphasis is solely on affirmative strategies, such as providing positive black male role models and increased educational opportunities within current structures. For example, Kal Alston (1993) cautions that separating Black males may result in “a univocal construction of black maleness into which the participants will be inducted—without any reassurance that the construction will allow for different approaches and embodiments of this ‘new’ cultural stance — towards maleness, manhood, and women” (p. 124).⁴⁸

⁴⁸ For more on African American male masculinities, see also: Awkward (2002); hooks (2004); and Ross (1998).

Problems for African American males extend beyond the schools. The harsh reality is that on a number of social, economic, and health indicators, African American males have particularly troubling statistics. For example, one in four black men die violently each year, and one in three black males is either in jail, on probation, or on parole (Whiting & Thabiti, 2008). Furthermore, Black men, compared to all other racial categories of men, have higher rates of heart disease, hypertension, infant mortality, mental disorders, psychiatric hospitalizations, and low life expectancy (Majors, 2001).

African American males must navigate in a complex American landscape in which the promise of civil rights era reforms have not translated into better opportunities and outcomes, at the same time as somewhat contradictory desires and identities limit the possibilities for a politics of resistance and change (Whiting and Thabiti, 2008). While many African American men have accepted and aspired to embody the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, the restricted structures of opportunity from institutionalized racism in American society (and schooling as an extension of the society) has prevented them from being able to do so, resulting in the formation of and various expressions of “Black masculinities.”⁴⁹ “Lacking legitimate institutional means, black males will often

⁴⁹ Despite a growing field of men’s studies and increased academic interest in masculinities, research on the intersections with race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status is somewhat limited and especially regarding African American males. According to Majors (2001), “black males are either rendered invisible or viewed as helpless victims in a racist system. With a few exceptions (e.g., Cazenave, 1984; Franklin, 1984; Majors, 1986, 1987), there has been a noteworthy dearth of literature on black men’s actual responses (i.e., survival strategies, coping mechanisms, and forms of resistance) to a limited structure of opportunity” (p. 210). This is beginning to change with the increased attention to the educational outcomes of Black youth. However, much empirical research and theoretical development is needed to better understand the complex situations and move towards transformational solutions. Holland and

go to great lengths to prove their manhood in interpersonal spheres of life (e.g., fighting, the emotional and physical domination of women, and involvement in risk-taking activities)” (Majors, 2001, p. 211). Majors (2001; Majors & Billson, 1992) refers to this expression of Black masculinity as the “cool pose,” which shows the dominant culture and Black male peers a strong and proud image of survival even in difficult circumstances. As Majors explains:

Although black people have been forced into conciliatory and often demeaning positions in American culture, there is nothing conciliatory about the expressive lifestyle. It is adaptation rather than submission. In that sense, then, cool pose is an attempt to carve out an alternative path to achieve the goals of dominant masculinity. Due to structural limitations, a black man may be impotent in the intellectual, political, and corporate world, but he can nevertheless display a potent personal style from the pulpit, in entertainment, and in athletic competition, with a verve that borders on the spectacular. (p. 211)

Unfortunately, this form of masculine expression has very little pay off for most Black men and boys and can lock them in their low status positions in society because it deemphasizes educational attainment and other intellectual endeavors that are integral aspects of the hegemonic forms of masculine power and success in American society. The embodiment of the cool pose as Black male’s response to institutionalized racism “does not put black males in positions to live and work in more egalitarian ways with

Eisenhart’s (1990) work on the effect of peer networks on resistance is particularly useful for framing ethnographic studies around Black male responses to limited opportunities.

women, nor does it directly challenge male hierarchies” (Majors, 2001, p. 215). In the school setting, such expressions of masculinity are often in direct conflict with the school culture and the (usually White) teachers and administrators. One predominant study in education, Ann Arnett Ferguson’s *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinities*, addresses how the ubiquitous labeling of Black males as “bad boys” and the school punishment system powerfully shape the identities of Black males to versions of masculinity that limit their ability to succeed even with increased opportunities (2001).

Black male strategies of resistance, formed around the rejection of the promise of patriarchal privilege rather than attempts to achieve hegemonic masculinity, have much better transformational promise. Public schooling can play a role in providing African American males (and others) opportunities for critically examining patriarchal privilege and gender identities and expressions.

I provide here only some initial thoughts on a few important current educational trends in policy and practice around gender, making it clear that careful implementation and further empirical research and theoretical analyses are required. This additional work could certainly benefit from the analyses I provide in this dissertation and other feminist and critical work on gender, race, education, and justice.

Final Remarks

The public school system is a fundamentally flawed institution that reflects the inequitable society that it serves, and minor inputs, isolated interventions, and individual prescriptions for schools are inadequate to restructure it. I am convinced that

what is needed is wholesale transformation of the institution, which is much bigger than schools themselves. To truly have justice, reforms must be comprehensive and systemic. Even so, we ought not be paralyzed; it is not all or nothing. We must both continue with transformational scholarship and an emancipatory political project, which allow us to imagine possibilities for a just future, while implementing less than ideal policies and practices that point us in the direction of transformation. As Carlos Alberto Torres cleverly puts it, “only the feverish imagination of technocrats who, paraphrasing Mark Twain’s irony, can be criticized for seeing all problems like nails because the only tool that they have is a hammer” (2009, p. 50). We need to think about gender reform strategies as more than abstracted technologies for success on standardized tests, but rather as complicated institutionally rooted matters of social justice related to historical and social constructions of the intersections of gender, race, and class.

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